SOME

ACCOUNT OF MYSELF.

BY

CHARLES EARL OF ERPINGHAM,

&c. &c. &c.

IN

Four Volumes.

"It is my intention to represent Characters such as they are in life; but Heaven forbid that I should pourtray any person in particular."— LE SAGE.

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CHAP. I.

LITERATURE.

ALTHOUGH with the aid of the bottle I contrived to fill up eight hours out of the four and twenty, there was a considerable portion of time in each day, which it was not in the nature of things that drinking and sleeping should consume. I never arrived at that species of beastiality to be found in some of the lower and middle orders of life, in which life is passed in the con-

stant succession of losing the senses and recovering them.

My mornings were wholly unemployed. Gaming I abhorred—of women I was weary, and of walking or riding as a pleasure I was sickened. I remember a sprig of fashion who feeling ashamed with having the inside of his head better furnished than any of his companions, such as knowing that Great Britain was an island, that Julius Cæsar lived before Louis the Fourteenth, as well as some other geographical and historical information of the same nature, assigned as a reason for his acquirements, that he had unhappily been some time resident with a relation in a distant part of the country, where no newspapers could be procured, and that for want of a better employment, while his hair was dressing, he had been driven to studies which were beneath the notice of a man of taste. I also remember to have

heard the son and heir of Sir George Buckett, who was looking forward to some high employment in the state, say that he constantly studied the affairs of the nation while he was cleaning his teeth.

I certainly had not the motives of the former, nor the prospects of the latter, but I nevertheless occasionally felt satisfied with my literary pursuits. A thirst of knowledge was I imagine originally engendered in me by my intercourse with Major General Blarney, who was allowed by competent judges to be one of the best cooks in England. The General supplied me with mental and bodily food, for being at the same hotel, and as I was almost as great a devotee as himself to the pleasures of the table, congeniality of sentiment soon led to an intimacy.

The General had been upon actual service, and had been taken prisoner under circumstances which I

have forgotten, but I suppose the cause of his surrendering was nothing very remarkable, as he omitted to state it in the account of his transactions with the enemy, which he published for the gratification of his countrymen, on his return from captivity. His statement was almost entirely confined to a detail of the wretched cookery he met with on his travels, and of the improvements he effected to the evident astonishment of the natives, who regarded him as something more than human, particularly when he was discovered to be as great an adept in the veterinary as in the culinary art. A horse shod by him was instantly doubled in value. His reputation with his Majesty of ———, who was both a glutton and a hunter, had at one time arrived at such a pitch, that he was considered a dangerous rival to the prime minister, who caballed against

him and procured his removal from court.

The general suffered immensely in his journey home from actual starvation, being hurried on from stage to stage with such rapidity, until he passed the frontiers, that he had not an opportunity of procuring a decent meal; and, as he stated, to eat what was provided for him was impossible. I felt interested in the accounts he gave me of his sufferings, and actually read his book from beginning to end.

In a short time I became as much enamoured of the general's cookery and conversation, as His Majesty of ———, and sincerely lamented that I had neglected my studies. But I still thought that the acquisition of knowledge would not be less valuable for coming at a rather late period of life. I therefore determined to make up for my lost time, and resolved not only to study during the dressing of my hair,

and the cleaning of my teeth, but also while I was eating my breakfast. By this means I hoped my stock of information would soon surpass that of Mr. Buckett.

The consequences of sipping at the fountain of knowledge, who can foresee? Reading books soon led me to admire authors; and it was with the greatest pleasure that I availed myself of the general's offer, to introduce me to the literary circle, which consumed part of the forenoon in the shop of Mr. Ackett, the bookseller.

I was delighted at thus mingling with men of literary talent, who courted science for herself alone, and whose patriotism induced them to edify their their country, without the prospect of sordid gain. I saw myself surrounded with men independent in purse and principle, and was frequently treated with the perusal of works in manuscript, and constantly with the reading

them before they were publicly ushered into the world. The praise which invariably followed any publication emanating from an individual among the chosen few, filled me with the highest admiration; and I considered myself honoured beyond expression in their accepting my frequent invitations to dinner.

I hardly know to what a depth this literary mania would have plunged me, had I not been roused from it by some trivial circumstances, which considerably derobed my new associates of their merits. But while the fervor lasted, I passed many hours together in my own apartment, dozing away the time in silent stupidity, which I then thought was *thinking*.

My mind was twisted and turned in every direction, to fix upon some subject on which I could exercise my talents; but the result of my study only served to convince me, that my

brain was formed to receive, and not to convey impressions. How it is that I am scribbling, at the present moment, I know not; but, perhaps there is a considerable difference in travelling in the regions of truth, and wandering in the wilds of fiction—in describing the faculties of the mind, and in recording the actions of the body.

My researches, however, enabled me to develope some of the secret springs of authorship; and I was satisfied that three-fourths of the difficulties vanished when a person had anything to write about. The great art lay, I was satisfied, in making a book out of nothing; and in this art, I will do my new friends the justice to say, that most of them excelled in an eminent degree. I read all their works with the greatest care. At this distance of time I have forgotten their titles; but, even after a steady perusal, I do not think that I acquired a

single idea, or in any way added to the stock of information I already possessed.

I was strenuously advised to illuminate the world with some of my lucubrations, which, as they would spring from a noble pen, would be relished by the public with a double zest. I was even invited to consider a work as my own, and to publish, with my name as the author standing in the title-page, a book that I had no inclination to read, upon a subject with which I was wholly unacquainted. These, however, were trifling objections, and easily amended. The book, I remember, was actually printed, and complete in every thing but its first leaf. I was offered the honour of it in fee simple for the very moderate sum of fifty guineas.

Now although this was purchasing literary fame at a cheap rate, I was such a novice in scientific pursuits, as to decline this opportunity of having

my name handed down to posterity, in the catalogue of noble authors, upon the plea of deception. But my chagrin was great, when only three days after, I joined the circle in congratulating Sir Thomas Bubble, on his last new publication; at the same time blaming him for keeping the progress of his labours a secret from his friends.

When the party was a little dispersed, I enquired for the book in question, in order at least to know what it was called, in case I should have occasion to mention it again to Sir Thomas, when, to my astonishment, I found it to be the individual work which had so lately been offered to myself. As I left the bookseller's shop, I stumbled upon the real writer, whom I upbraided with his venality. His defence to the charge was such as completely to exculpate him from blame. He said, that he was an unfortunate author by profession, and that he

had seriously offended the booksellers, by publishing a book upon his own account. The consequence was, that they refused to purchase any more of his productions. Since that time, however, he had done pretty well in disposing of his works to would-be authors, who were ready to pay him more liberally than his former patrons. The work he had offered to me, was, in the first instance, engaged to Lord Bagsworth, but his Lordship having had a run of ill luck, he was unable to make good his payment in any other way than by promises; which, as it was a species of security his Lordship was in the known habit of issuing, without troubling his head much about honouring when due, the author wisely declined. It was then offered to myself, and, on my refusal, became the property of Sir Thomas Bubble, who had been one of the author's best customers.

By the help of a Bank note, and a declaration of secrecy, I discovered that not one of my literary friends were the actual writers of the works which bore their name, but that they were all manufactured in the same way.

This was one of the trivial circumstances to which I have alluded. The film was completely removed from my eyes, and I viewed those I had so lately admired, with the most sovereign contempt. Had anything more been wanting to have enabled me to fix a proper estimation upon the abilities of these dealers in brains, I might easily have procured it, by mingling with characters of *real* literary eminence, and hearing the ridicule which was justly heaped upon these drones in the hive of learning, The praise which they lavished upon each other, was all they ever received.

CHAP. II.

AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

SICKENED with the quackery of science, and with its empty-headed *professors*, I withdrew myself entirely from the region of letters, leaving the pains and pleasures of authorship to such as chose to enjoy them, either as originals, or as dealers in second-hand commodities.

During the interval which elapsed, between the time of my getting rid of my old employment, and entering upon a new one, I almost sunk into a state of apathy, from which I was roused

by all the evils I had formerly endured being forced upon my recollection, by the unexpected appearance of the last person in the world whom I was desirous of seeing.

I frequently sat for hours at the window of the coffee-room, which fronted the public street, deriving, or rather endeavouring to derive, amusement from the passing scene. A succession of new objects occupied my mind, as far as it was capable of being occupied with any thing; and a constant change saved me from the exertion of finding food for the mind by the operation of thinking. By repeated observations, I had led myself to expect the appearance of remarkable individuals at stated times, and was disappointed if the hour and the person did not arrive together. The only object about me which I valued was my watch, which performed its motions with remarkable correctness, and told

me, to the moment, when it was proper for me to engage in the active avocations of eating and drinking, or in the passive callings of sleeping and doing nothing.

My eyes, for want of other objects, frequently rested upon a man whom I observed, for several days following, lurking about the door of the hotel. There was nothing particularly attractive in his appearance, except perhaps to a real lover of the picturesque, who had habituated himself to confound beauty and deformity, not together, but to mistake each for the other. He bore the marks of the most squalid poverty. His chesks were hollowed from the effects of starvation; and although there was every thing about him which indicated that he had once seen happier days, and been in possession of athletic limbs, nothing now remained but an emaciated skeleton, held together by muscles, which did

not seem capable of uniting the bones for the due performance of the functions of life.

The looks from a pair of haggard eyes were frequently directed towards myself. Without actually begging, he accepted alms of all those who either from motives of charity, ostentation, or to free themselves from solicitation, are willing to relieve the objects which are presented before them under the guise of poverty and distress. As to myself, I can safely say that my charity was never abused, for it was a virtue I never practised. I always considered that indiscriminate donations only tended to sanction idleness, and increase mendicity. In order, therefore, to avoid encouraging the unproductive classes, or, if the reader pleases, to indulge a selfish desposition, I never put myself in the way of experiencing those delightful sensations, which, I have been given to un-

derstand, are the invariable attendants upon a benevolent action. It was quite sufficient for me to reason upon the abstract principle. Perhaps as I had never suffered from actual want, I might have judged of the rest of mankind by myself, and have concluded that as the blessings of life are fleeting, the curses are imaginary.

Contrary to my usual custom, I one day dined in the coffee room, and took my station at one of the windows fronting the street. For the first time, I had a full view of the beggar's face without his being conscious that my eyes were directed towards him.

In the poverty struck visage of the miserable wretch before me, I recognized the once fascinating countenance of Villiers. I felt my blood freezing within me. An inward shuddering seized every nerve. His conduct rushed upon my mind in the most glowing colours. My head turned giddy, and

it was some time before I recovered my perfect recollection. Various passions seized upon me by turns, and I verily believe that in the space of a few minutes, I went through the whole gamut, playing a fugue upon every key, and gradually advancing from the bass to the treble. The rascality of the object before me, and my own folly, stared me full in the face. My mind was occupied by turns with the thirst for revenge, and the dread of exposure. Revenge at last predominated, and in revenge I determined to indulge to satiety. By exposure I could not forfeit any one's esteem, for there was no person whose regard I possessed, or whose regard I was desirous of obtaining.

The scoundrel who had abused my confidence was at last within my grasp. I deliberated within myself as to the most effectual mode of adminstering a punishment, which should be

adequate to his crimes. But preparatory to my deciding upon the best mode of proceeding, I thought it would be proper to hear what account the wretch could give of himself, and of his conduct. I was satisfied by his hanging about the hotel, that he had stationed himself there for the purpose of attracting my notice; I therefore gave directions that he might be shown into my sitting room, whither I immediately followed him.

I seated myself and looked towards him, as if I expected him to explain the reason of his present appearance.

"You are surprized to see me," said he, "and perhaps, still more surprized to see me in my present state."

I continued silent.

"Your looks, my Lord, ask me for explanation. My rags will speak eloquently for themselves, and for me. A recital of the steps, by which I have gradually sunk to this pitch of misery,

will neither amuse nor instruct you. It would be giving unnecessary pain to both, without proving of the least benefit to either."

"Why do you seek me? With what confidence can you appear in my presence? Do you not dread the consequences?"

"No! Every change must be for the better. You may, indeed, expose a beggar, at the expence of publishing to the world your *own* folly, and if you are not by this time aware that folly is the legal prey of knavery, you have lived to little purpose. Beyond such an exposure, it is out of your power to injure me. I only took from you what would have been the property of some one else."

"Your gains were enormous!"

"So they ought to have been. What else could have induced me, to have made myself subservient to a man of your disposition. It is now some

years since we parted. If you have found a companion since our separation, who has either respected, or regarded you for any thing but your wealth, it is to me you owe the obligation. If you have reflected at all, it is to me you are indebted, and if your temper is sufficiently curbed to enable you to mingle with mankind on terms of equality, it is my conduct that has been the means of teaching you.

"What has become of the immense sums of which you have defrauded me?"

"Wasted! There was a fatality attached to whatever you possessed. Once yours, it acquired a habit of mouldering away. It may surprize you, but I was only a novice in the art of cozenage. An experienced professor with so good a subject as yourself, would have made an attention upon you answer his purpose, but I still question, if even with a veteran in the

science, what had once belonged to you, would have rested quietly.

"How came you here?"

"By charity!"

"What do you expect from me?"

"Charity?"

"By what claim?"

"Your gratitude! If you have not profited by the lessons which I gave you, it is no fault of mine."

"Go on ——."

"Have you never been the dupe of any one since we parted?"

"Do you really expect an answer?"

"I am perfectly indifferent about one. I can answer for you. You have never ceased to be the dupe either of your own folly or of the designs of others. I endeavoured to give you an insight into mankind, but I fear I have been unsuccessful. The tree will always be known by its fruits: the nectarine will never blossom upon the

thorn. You have been happy since our meeting?"

"You ask the question as if an answer were unnecessary, and appear to well know, that I have been miserable."

"You are mistaken. You give me credit for a greater stock of information then I really possess. I do *not* know from what has actually passed, that you have been miserable. It is sufficient that I am intimately acquainted with your temper and disposition, and *with* them I am too well aware that happiness, or even comparative comfort is out of your reach. The recollection of your follies act upon your mind, as rust upon iron. But in misery we can sympathize; you in the midst of plenty—I in the midst of want. Your prospects?"

"—— Are hopeless."

"Here is another proof of the sym-

pathy, which first led us together. Here too we are upon an equality."

"With what face dare ——."

"Hold! I am here by your invitation. You cannot accuse me of having intruded upon you. Good breeding, therefore, is at least due to your guest. It is true, I wished to engage your nctice, for I sought after you to satisfy the wants of us both. Since we parted my experience in the world has increased tenfold. I have imbibed knowledge in the school of adversity, and am ready to exchange advice for bread. If you wish at last to know yourself, you ought not to hesitate an instant. Besides, as I have already said, I am entitled to your gratitude. I preserved to you the patrimony of my ancestors."

This was too much; the patrimony he had preserved was no longer mine. The expences of Lady Erpingham's establishment absorbed the whole.

However, I might previously have been disposed to forgiveness, this drove all favourable impressions from my mind. I well knew that if I had *luckily lost* my patrimony, I never should have *found* an inclination in Lord Vavacour's co-heiress to have met me at the altar. In balancing accounts in the scale of happiness, I would willingly have given up the Erpingham property, if I could have freed myself from the shackles of my wife.

I rang the bell, and beckoned Villiers to leave the room.

"You refuse me?"

I made no reply——

'You are ready to brave all consequences?"

"Wretch! leave me, and be careful we do not meet again. But that I am satisfied I cannot add to thy misery, thou shouldest pay the forfeit of thy crimes."

A ghastly smile came across his countenance. He was advancing towards me, but the entrance of the waiter arrested his progress, and caused him to retreat.

CHAP. III.

CRIM. CON.

TO a superficial observer of nature, the remarks I made at the close of the last chapter respecting Lady Erpingham, may appear somewhat at variance with common sense, and with the usage of the world. There are many, I am well aware, who estimate the supposed happiness of others by the apparent portion of misery with which they are visited. Thus, although, a termagant wife will be allowed to constitute a positive evil, a sulky cold blooded helpmate, who has neither feelings nor

affections, and who either is, or affects to be, indifferent to the conduct of a husband, is looked upon as a negative good.

Notwithstanding my actions may have belied me, I am satisfied that I possessed a heart formed for the cultivation of social enjoyments. If I was incapable, from the blight which destroyed my well founded hopes of comfort, of experiencing that ardency of attachment which can be felt but once, I was at least capable of viewing with esteem, respect, and regard, a female who would have shared my pleasures, and have taken an interest in my pains. My ideas were naturally of the domestic order, but a domestic life had always been denied me. I never saw a wife hanging upon the arm of a husband, with a face which indicated content, but I envied the felicity which I was doomed never to enjoy; and my blood boiled within me, when I met

with those whom love had united, and to whom friendship, founded upon reciprocal attachment, had strewed the thorny path of life with flowers that fade not, and with fruits that preserve their flavour till the scene is closed.

Almost from the day which fixed the indissoluble bonds between Lady Erpingham and myself, the few amusements I indulged in, I procured without the pale of my household. Uneasiness had fixed herself on my brow in characters too marked to be mistaken, but I will do the justice to some of my female acquaintance, in saying that endeavours were not wanting to dissipate the gloom which surrounded me.

I had not been long married before I was considered as a "loose fish." This term, I understood to mean a person *loose* in every point but the most essential. The nuptial tie, however, I found to be no bar to the indulgence of inclination. It only caused a differ-

ence in the objects, and the married were substituted for the single.

Of all the females with whom I associated none had appeared to take a greater interest in my unhappy condition than Lady Isabella Ainsworth. Being daughter to the Duke of Tiverton, her rank assured her welcome to Lady Erpingham. Lady Isabella was one of the guests invited by the Countess, during the honey moon. She was, as times go, a handsome woman, but with a face more remarkable for expression than for regular beauty. However, her attentions were of the more dangerous kind, for she was enabled to obtain that influence by the operations of time and opportunity, which she failed to command upon first impressions.

Lady Isabella professed herself to be unhappy in her own marriage, in having a husband who was better suited in point of feelings and disposition to Lady Erpingham, than to

herself. There was a co-incidence in our situation, which ripened acquaintance into intimacy, and a similarity in our fate, which mellowed that intimacy into pity for our mutual sufferings.

Pity, every one knows, is nearly allied, probably first cousin, to love. At all events, I can assert from experience, that there are certain sensations which have the same degree of relationship to both.—But I am entering into a disquisition upon the passions, instead of telling a simple, and perhaps a foolish tale.

The soul of Mr. Ainsworth was devoted to his hounds, and his bottle, and as the seasons varied, the one or the other was predominant. Although the daughter of a duke, Lady Isabella's portion had been none of the largest, and Mr. Ainsworth's chief attraction was a fortune supposed to be clear, but which was in fact loaded with incumbrances, which the expences of himself and

wife were continually increasing. They supported an establishment both in town and country, for their mutual convenience, but like two buckets in a well, Lady Isabella chose to reside in London during the sporting season, while Mr. Ainsworth usually made the town house his abode during the summer.

With other idlers I frequented the house of Lady Isabella, for the amusement it afforded. I felt a pleasure in her society, but it was not until I became disgusted with literary pursuits, that I found my inclinations fettered in the slightest degree. When my attention was weaned from authors and books, the blank which was left required to be filled up. I sought the assistance of Lady Isabella to drive away the *ennui*, which seized me, and obtained it. Fame, I knew, had sounded forth the praises of her ladyship upon several occasions of a similar

nature. But that to me was an additional recommendation, aware, probably, that by practice alone perfection is attained.

At the period when Villiers made his appearance at the hotel, my evenings were usually passed in the company of Lady Isabella. Her fascinations were effective, and I was not a little proud at having supplanted several pretenders to her ladyship's favour. Although the world had made free with her ladyship's reputation, the accusations against her had never assumed a tangible shape; she was, therefore, visited, and received by the tribe of fashionables, who submit to be led by custom, instead of being guided by conviction. The person who is countenanced by *every body* must in the eyes of the world be immaculate, and as Lady Isabella had not openly infringed upon the code of propriety, the censors of fashionable life had not de-

cided upon her having passed the bounds of decorum. Still, however, she was more tolerated than courted. She had afforded ample scope for scandal to work upon, and the same person that accosted her with a smile, frequently left her with a sneer, when that sneer was not likely to be perceptible to the party concerned.

But Lady Isabella knew the world. She placed a proper estimation upon its good opinion, and attached sufficient importance to its censure. In other words, she despised both. I was inclined to agree with her, for I had too often seen vice triumphant, and virtue degraded, to place any great value upon reputation in the light in which it is usually considered.

An intercourse which had exceeded the prescribed bounds was interrupted by the arrival of Mr. Ainsworth, who felt himself compelled to add to the incumbrances which already burthened

his estates. Cash, at that time, not being easy to be procured, his attentions were directed to other means of raising a supply. Among other modes, he directed his views to myself. On a sudden his comforts had been broken in upon, and his domestic peace destroyed. Paragraphs swarmed in the news-papers, and Lady Isabella's character was for ever blasted. An action was commenced against me for criminal conversation, in which, the damages were rated at only fifty thousand pounds, and I was involved in a labyrinth of perplexity, from which I saw no possibility of extricating myself without a heavy fine upon my imprudence.

Lady Isabella naturally threw herself upon my protection, without doubt expecting me to attend to her future provision. All this was very reasonable. Her claims upon me were unanswerable; for my sake she had been

deserted by the world, and on my account she had yielded up, all that is dear, or *ought* to be dear to woman. I cannot say that I was exactly pleased with my bargain, for to confess the truth, I was a little weary of the partial connection; a permanent one, therefore, held out no very pleasing prospect.. But it would have been ungenerous and unmanly to have uttered a complaint.

I provided apartments for the lady, and did my best to recompense her, for what she had sacrificed. My next step was to defend the action, as far as a defence could be made consistent with *honourable* conduct towards her ladyship. It would have been highly improper to have urged the lady's former levity. Nothing was left for me to plead, but the husband's carelessness, and upon this point I prepared to dilate as much as possible.

Fortune, however, was more kind to me than I deserved. I was informed

of a previous affair, in which Mr. Ainsworth had compromised the damages, and retaken his wife to his bosom. In my case, he was really anxious to get rid of her, and in the ruined state of her husband's finances, Lady Isabella was no less anxious for a wealthy protector.

Having no ambition to employ an agent in marring my cause, I undertook the preliminary management of it myself. My first step was to lay before the husbsnd the evidence I should have to adduce on the trial, which was certainly not of a nature to redound to his honour. It had the desired effect, and produced a compromize, in which I engaged to suffer judgment to go by default, in order to the facilitating a divorce, and to pay the sum of two thousand pounds, in lieu of any damages which might be assessed upon me.

It may seem strange that with so

good a defence I should have agreed to such a settlement of the business. But I had reasons, which in my estimation were sufficiently weighty to influence my decision. In the first place, my evidence was not so perfect as I could have wished it to be. Secondly, I was terrified at the glorious uncertainty of the law. Thirdly, the trouble in which I should have been involved, appalled me. Fourthly and lastly, though not least in my estimation, I was gratified at the eclât which the business would bring upon me, particularly as I could obtain it on such easy terms.

I could readily figure to myself the situation and feelings of my father and mother. A departure from the laws of chastity, on the part of a female, affords strong presumptive proofs of a weakness of understanding, and of a total want of foresight. The woman who has yielded, will always be an ob-

ject of contempt, even to the man to whom she has sacrificed what should be more prized than existence. In my opinion, no treatment on the part of a husband can justify the offence; however cruelty may, in some instances, palliate it. There is, or *ought* to be, a delicacy about the female mind, from which no female can depart, unless she has wilfully submitted to the absolute dominion of vice or folly.

Lady Isabella did not long remain a clog upon my hands. She discovered, by some means or other, the arrangement which had been made between Mr. Ainsworth and myself, and played off the same artillery against her husband as had been successful in my case. An investigation into the real facts would, of course, have been fatal to Mr. Ainsworth's projects. But Lady Isabella was not nice; she entered into a compromise with her husband, by which, for an annuity, she consented

to throw no obstacles in the way of a divorce.

Before the proceedings which were to reduce Lady Isabella to the use of her maiden name were brought to a conclusion, but after her annuity was firmly settled, the apartments which her ladyship occupied became untenanted. We had never openly resided together, as being married myself, I was not lost to all sense of decency; but my visits were daily. A note was left for me, simply apologizing for having given me so much trouble, and stating, that she had released me from all further cares on her account, by placing herself under the protection of Major O'Brien, who, she said, had prior claims upon her affections.

I neither envied the Major, nor regretted the loss of the lady. I have since heard that they continue together upon amicable terms, solely by her spirit of perseverance, which has en-

abled her to refuse either to marry the Major, or to give up any part of her annuity. Lady Isabella followed her own inclinations in every thing. The Major was her rallying point, to which she constantly returned from her frequent aberrations. But the Major was a philosopher; jealousy was therefore beneath him, and as Lady Isabella permitted him to share her purse, he was indifferent about sharing any thing else.

Of all the scrapes in which I had involved myself, this had given me the slightest portion of vexation. I had, it is true, been Lady Isabella's dupe, but the consequences had been so trivial, when compared with some former occurrences, that I considered myself rather fortunate than otherwise. I will own myself to have been deceived respecting Lady Isabella, by her having been among the chosen number of

those invited by Lady Erpingham. But to Lady Erpingham rank was every thing, and character nothing. All her ideas were drawn from the peerage book; and if a person could produce a pedigree, whether it graced the brows of a highwayman or a street-walker, her ladyship would have been as well satisfied as if it adorned the man of worth, or the woman of honour.

Many wives would have been angry at the event which I have just mentioned, even although they had lived in a state of half-separation. But Lady Erpingham had no idea unconnected with state and grandeur. I never heard that she made the slightest allusion, either to my own conduct, or to that of Lady Isabella. We met occasionally during the time the *faux pas* formed the chief topic of conversation, but there was not the least difference in her be-

haviour. I made the most formal bow, when I enquired into her ladyship's health, and received in return the usual stately curtesy, when she assured me that she was well.



CHAP. IV.

PROMISES.

AS Villiers will have again to make his appearance upon the scene of action, it may not be amiss to keep him in mind. I felt myself considerably disturbed at seeing him so unexpectedly, although I despised his threats. Probably, if I had racked my brains for a century in endeavouring to devise the most severe punishment which it was in my power to have inflicted, I could not have fixed upon any one more painful than the torture he must

necessarily have felt in his degraded state.

All attempts to recover my lost property would have been unavailing ; and, as he observed, an exposure of the circimstances which had passed between us would only hold forth a knave and a fool to public view. In my conscience, I verily believe that many a rascal escapes the fangs of justice from the same motives on the part of a prosecutor. But I had a more powerful reason ; I must have confessed myself to have been in the wrong, which I never could have submitted to.

I left Villiers, therefore, to his fate, but not without some little exultation at seeing the wretch who had abused my confidence to a degree unparalleled, as far as my own experience will enable me to judge, reduced to beg for charity from the person he had so greatly deceived ; and I exulted still further (more perhaps to my shame as a man,)

that I denied the morsel which was required at my hands.

As my connection with Lady Isabella Ainsworth was brought to a crisis soon after my rencontre with Villiers, my attention was directed to a new object, sufficiently powerful to obliterate all traces of an event, which would otherwise have made a greater impression upon my mind. As he did not again come across me, I soon forgot that I had even seen him. If I thought of him at all, it was only with a malicious joy at his abject condition. He appeared to me to have no prospect before him but starvation or crime, one of which, I conceived, would soon rid the world and myself of a monster.

The London season, and my concerns with Lady Isabella Ainsworth, closed at nearly the same time; but, for want of an object to which my steps could be directed, I remained in London till the beginning of September, intend-

ing then to proceed to Bingwood, where I had never been since my marriage with Lady Erpingham. Indeed my visits there since I was accompanied by Doctor Bubbleby, when he went to take possession of the living, had been transient to a degree. For form's sake, I was twice there in my way from Erpingham to London, during the time it was under repair and improvement. I had no real occasion for going there at present, for I should be unjust to my wife if I omitted to mention, that she actually invited me, with other friends, to pass some time with her at Erpingham, which she considered as her own property. In this invitation it must be allowed, that there was a consider able portion of condescension, when the peculiar circumstances in which I had been so lately placed with Lady Isabella Ainsworth are borne in mind.

My arrival at Bingwood, of which, contrary to my usual custom, I had

previously desired that the tenants should be apprized, was welcomed by Dr. Bubbleby and the principal part of my old friends. Domestic misery soon flies abroad, and even before I left London it was well known that I had ceased to reside under the same roof with my wife, and that my residence in the country, for the future, would be fixed at Bingwood.

They who have had the opportunity of witnessingthe vast importance to the apparent welfare of a district, afforded by the presence of a great landed proprietor, will not wonder that even selfish as I was in my habits and disposition, my presence should have diffused a real joy. I have said the *apparent* welfare of a district, because I much doubt whether it be the *real* welfare. It is to be questioned, whether the increased circulation of money occasioned by the residence of a large and wealthy family, counterbalances

the degradation in the moral character of the peasantry, inevitable upon their mingling with servants contaminated by the vices of a capital.

I would by no means infer the non-existence of vicious propensities among the rural inhabitants of the country; on the contrary, I believe that nature has distributed the seeds of good and evil with an equal hand in all directions. But example frequently elicits traits of depravity which without that example might have lain dormant. In a country village it may be as truly said of the living as of the dead,

> " Some mute inglorious Milton, here may rest,
> " Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood,"

On recollection, however, the quotation is not so well adapted to my purpose as I at first supposed, but as I have written it, I shall not draw my pen through it. My mind was occupied with the bad consequences to be

derived from the contagion of the metropolis, in calling evils into active existence that might have slumbered till the day of judgement. But if by such means, the tongue, or more properly speaking, the pen, of some "mute inglorious Milton" could be set in motion, I should be inclined to risk the experiment, even at the expence of awakening some "guiltless Cromwell."

Dr. Bubbleby received me with his usual complacent smile. It did not appear to me that time had committed the least ravage upon his constitution. There was the same species of vivacious manner, which at first had attracted my attention, and which, had not his real character been developed to me, would still have led me to view him and listen to him with pleasure.

The doctor had very recently taken up his residence at the Parsonage, and had fitted up the house in a costly

manner. "It was now," he said, "a little fit for a christian." By this phrase I apprehend the doctor thought only of *modern* christians, or rather of the beneficed clergy of kindred souls with his own, and had forgotten that primitive christianity with its attributes of meekness, charity, and brotherly love had ever existed. But as it is impossible that one person should be enabled to judge of the motives which actuate the conduct of another, I have no right to bring accusations against the doctor which nothing but his own behaviour has justified. God forbid that I should charge any man with hypocrisy, when perhaps it is innate vice alone which guides his actions, and impels him to a line of conduct which his better judgment would condemn. At all events, my business with the doctor is to record him as he is, or as I found him. I have no right to say what he ought to have been.

As I passed by the parsonage on my way to the Abbey, my shameful neglect of Mrs. Farren and her family rushed across my mind, and occasioned sensations with which I would not wish my greatest enemy to be visited. I had promised to attend to her wants and at the time I last saw her, I had determined to repair the injustice I had done to her family, on the disposal of the living to Dr. Bubbleby at her husband's death. But from the moment of my giving the promise, until the instant of my present arrival at Bingwood, I had wholly forgotten that such persons as Mrs. Farren and her family were in existence.

My enquiries by no means tended to reconcile me to myself. Mrs. Farren had, indeed, placed a reliance on my promises, but she had omitted to bring them to my recollection. Too proud to solicit, where solicitation ought not to have been necessary, she sunk un-

der the storm which she could not withstand, Stripped most mercilessly by Dr. Bubbleby of every thing that could be torn from her, she had despairingly left a place to which she had been long an ornament, to seek a refuge no one knew whither. The doctor alone was deaf to humanity, constantly declaring the extent of his losses in taking possession of a living where the most shameful perversions of justice, such as charity and benevolence, —consideration for the distressed and liberality to the humble, had been suffered to exist in despite of self interest, and in defiance of the interests of the church. She had left Bingwood with the respect of the wealthy and the universal benediction of the poor.

Young Farren, who had nothing but his merit to recommend him, and who was wholly unacquainted with those arts without which merit is but an incumberance, had exerted himself to the

utmost in procuring the means of sheltering his unhappy mother and her family. But as his principles would not permit him to be the pander of vice, and as his morality would not suffer him to be the abettor of indecency, his efforts were wholly unsuccessful. After many unavailing attempts at obtaining any preferment in England, or even a curacy, he had accepted the post of chaplain to one of the condemned regiments stationed in an unhealthy fort on the coast of Africa.

Dr. Bubbleby perceived I was much hurt at the account which had been given me, but mistaking the cause of my uneasiness, observed that it was a shame to breed so many people to a profession already overstocked.

"I declare," he continued, "I am shocked at the appearance of my curate whenever I see him in the reading desk; and of a week day it is really horrible to see him at a funeral. Lord

Shakebags, who dined with me about a month ago, really thought I encouraged the poor devil in wearing ragged clothes. By the bye, my Lord, I must positively alter that dining room at the parsonage. It is really horrible to place one's friends in a situation, where they can see nothing but tombstones. But as to my curate, your Lordship would hardly judge, by looking at him, that I actually pay him thirty pounds a year, besides allowing old farmer Harrowell fifteen shillings quarterly for his lodging. Really, my Lord these are charges which cut deep into a tolerably good living!"

"I am sorry, Dr. Bubbleby, you did not think of young Farren!"

"Young Farren, my Lord, was his own enemy. His ideas of independence were very well fitted for one of the cloth who was already fitted with a mitre, but totally improper for a person who had only a mitre in his eye.

But pray, my Lord, allow me to ask if your lordship has any interest in a certain quarter. They say that Dr. Hogwash, the rural dean of —— is past all recovery. If I could meet with any one to back my interest with Mrs. Sparkle, the present sultana, I might perhaps succeed."

"Is that mode of seeking preferment exactly creditable, doctor?"

"It is the sure mode, my Lord, and you cannot blame a person for making the best use of influence while it lasts. Dr. Waddle not only paid a thousand pounds, but obliged his wife to visit and receive Mrs. Sparkle till he succeeded to the living and prebendary which Dr. Muzzy had just vacated by death. For my own part, I consider that all sin consists in the intention of committing it, and I think every step justifiable which raises a man in the world. As to myself, I profess to be guided by liberal principles, and am one

who never views faults through a magnifying glass."

I was already too well acquainted with the character and disposition of the doctor to be surprized at any thing which fell from his lips. I would willingly have annihilated him, and have placed young Farren, if I could have found him, in his place. But as I could never bring myself to acknowledge an error, even though only an error in judgment, I behaved with all the circumspection I was master of, adhering to the outward forms of civility, while in my heart I loathed the wretch on whose account I had so totally lost sight of justice and prudence.

The doctor told me that he should surprise me by bringing with him to the Abbey some old friends that I little dreamt of seeing. He refused to tell me who they were, as he would not rob me of the pleasure which I should doubt-

less receive from an agreeable surprize.

I could do no less than request that the doctor as well as his friends would honour me with their company on the following day. To this the doctor assented, promising in the name of the party for their punctual attendance.

CHAP. V.

A ROAD TO PREFERMENT.

I DID not much rack my brain in divining to which of my old acquaintances the doctor alluded. I had none that could create any interest in me, but it so happened that I was assailed by old friends from more quarters than one. My arrival at Bingwood was soon buzzed about the country, and on the second morning I was gratified with a visit from the Earl of Cullymore. I was somewhat at a loss to account for my being thus honoured, particularly as several years had

elapsed since I considered myself on terms of intimacy with him. Lord Cullymore, however, I found had been some years practising a rigid system of economy, for the best of all possible reasons, and had made the important discovery that his expences were considerably curtailed in making use of other people's houses instead of his own.

From a phæton and four, accompanied by two grooms in splendid liveries, his lordship had gradually descended to a one horse chaise, attended by a lad in no livery at all. I do not apprehend that his lordship was any where much distinguished as a welcome guest, but the way in which he usually made good his quarters was such as insured him admittance, and as his feelings were not of the most sensitive order, I imagine, that it required a hint of rather a broad description, such as a total removal, or

some other mode equally effectual, to get rid of him.

My having the pleasure of then seeing him, was occasioned by the removal of Sir Jeffrey Henclack and his family to the Continent. A watering place would not answer the purpose, as Lord Cullymore proposed to accompany them. Thus unhoused, he made his way to Bingwood, merely, as he stated, when he shook my hand on alighting from his humble vehicle, to stay a single night on his way to Lord Snuffleton's.

I could not do otherwise than express myself gratified at the honour he was doing me, and as I was not at that time aware of the extreme difficulty of dislodging him, I was rather pleased than otherwise, at the presence of a person, who would assist me in finding entertainment for Doctor Bubbleby and my old acquaintances, whoever

they were, that intended to honour me with their company.

About half an hour before dinner, I perceived Doctor Bubbleby making his way across the lawn, accompanied by two ladies and a gentleman. The latter I soon recognized as Mr. Purry, and as the party approached, I soon traced the features of Mrs. Dunder. To the second lady I was an entire stranger, but I supposed she could be no other than the worthy helpmate of the worthy doctor.

Under this last impression, when I rose to pay my respects to Mrs. Dunder, and to hold out my hand to Mr. Purry, I addressed the other lady with, "Mrs. Bubbleby I presume."

The Doctor blushed and affected to smile, assuring me he was not so happy; the lady he had the honour to present to me, never having blest any man with her charms and accomplishments, but still under the appellation

of Miss Lavinia Packthread, continued to dart her unerring shafts to such as rashly exposed themselves within the range of her powers.

I made my bow to Miss Lavinia as to a stranger, and when the doctor had finished his eulogium, I looked up at the person who was the object of it. I confess I saw nothing particularly attractive in a tall thin female of about thirty-five years of age, but I gave a tacit consent to the doctor's account by making a second bow, much lower than the first.

I expressed myself, as in duty bound, highly delighted at seeing my old friends, and we all exchanged mutual congratulations at the little alteration which time had been able to effect. Mr. Purry, indeed, did not pay me many compliments on my youthful appearance, but Mrs. Dunder assured me that I did not look a day older than when I was at Harrowgate.

I made the whole party known to Lord Cullymore, and then asked the Doctor if we should not have the honour of seeing Mrs. Bubbleby.

The Doctor again coloured, and observed that Mrs. Bubbleby was unfortunately from home.

I saw plainly that Mrs. Bubbleby was a tender point with the Doctor, particularly as neither the ladies nor Mr. Purry, made any allusions to her. I did not conceive there was any harm in Mrs. Dunder choosing to visit the Doctor under such circumstances, but that Miss Lavinia Packthread should be a visitor during the absence of the mistress of the house, struck me as being somewhat extraordinary, particularly as Miss Lavinia had by no means lost the traces of having had in her youth considerable pretensions to beauty.

As I have represented Miss Lavinia as only thirty-five, and spoke of the

traces of former beauty, I dare say, I shall be reminded of the many lovely women whose ages much exceed what I have mentioned. I have no objection to agree to the truth of this proposition, but if my memory does not fail me, I am inclined to think that the love-inspiring race of females, who at that age have retained their powers of captivating, and perhaps have had those powers increase with their years, have not been doomed by fate or caprice to a life of single blessedness. I have no dislike to such as are denominated old maids, nor do I think they merit the aspersions which are usually levelled at them. Their situation arises more from misfortune than from fault, and it is no matter of wonder that misfortune should sour the temper. As I have never by marriage contributed to the happiness of a woman, I have probably no right to extol the advantages of a state, of the blessings of which I

am confessedly ignorant, but I firmly believe that neither man nor woman lead a single life from inclination.

Having broke the thread of my story in honour of Miss Lavinia, I shall take the liberty, before I resume it, of saying a word or two relative to Dr. Bubbleby and his fair lady, which as it is not exactly intertwined with my own actions, may as well be mentioned here as any where else. Not that I heard of the circumstances I am about to mention till long after the period of which in the natural course of things I ought to be relating, yet as Doctor Bubbleby is now properly before me,—as I entertain towards him a dislike almost amounting to hatred, and a contempt close verging upon disgust,—as after this I shall have done with him for some time to come,—all these reasons combined, induce me to get him off my hands for the present, that he may not come across my mind at times

when I would willingly forget that such a being is in existence. I am aware that I have been guilty of anticipating my story in more than one instance, but I question if sticking closer to chronology would have made it more intelligible. At all events, I will maintain my indefeasible right of telling my own story in my own way.

How I came by my information is of little or no consequence, it is sufficient that I am satisfied with its being true, and I leave the reader to judge whether the account was calculated to raise the Doctor in my esteem, or whether it was likely to encrease the contempt and disgust, with which I had viewed him, previous to my becoming acquainted with the circumstances I am going to relate.

Doctor Bubbleby was the offspring of a damsel, who superintended the domestic arrangments of the Vicar of ——. Scandal had busied her-

self with the worthy Vicar, but had not been sufficiently powerful to affix the bantling upon him, as the chastity of the Doctor's mother was not exactly clear from stain. But the Vicar was not devoid of benevolence, as he placed little Theophilus, who was christened after himself, at the charity school.

The death of the Vicar, before Theophilus had attained his tenth year, threw him upon the wide world; as his mother, having to seek a fresh connection for herself, could not be expected to take upon her the charge of supporting a boy, who, in this manufacturing country, ought to be able to maintain himself. Theophilus was therefore turned adrift, and, at a loss for present subsistence, joined a set of personages who were in the practice of levying general contributions, under the appellation of gypsies.

A vagrant life was suited to the pliant

disposition of the young Theophilus; and had it not been for a trifling accident, the hero, in spite of his diminutive stature, might have risen to some rank in the army of beggars. That he was abundantly supplied with cunning, I had ample proofs, and could readily believe that he would have been one of the brightest ornaments to such a society. The accident I allude to was the murder of a traveller, whose resistance to a robbery rendered murder inevitable, at least in the opinion of the gang. The retreat not being conducted with the requisite degree of care and circumspection, the party, including Theophilus, were seized within a few hours of the perpetration of the deed, and safely lodged in "durance vile," under strong presumptive evidences of guilt.

The honour of the gang had been proverbial, and it might have been questioned if the presumptive proofs

which could be adduced against them. would have been sufficient to convict them, had not the dread of punishment and the hope of escape, operated upon the mind of Theophilus. The boy was then between fourteen and fifteen years of age, and had already felt that the world was before him. Knowing that his character for integrity was lost among the gypsey fraternity, if he alone evaded the fangs of justice, and certain if he did not evade them, there was no hope of further preferment, he sent a private intimation to the magistrate by whom he and his friends had been committed, desiring a secret conference.

A piteous tale which accompanied the recital of the murder, inclined the magistrate to look upon the betrayer of his comrades with a favourable eye. Theophilus gave the justice to understand, that his parents, he could recollect, were in a state of affluence when

he was stolen from them, but that he was too young to remember either their names or their place of abode.

The consequences were, that Theophilus was admitted a king's evidence—his former associates stood candidates for the gallows, to which they were duly elected, and Theophilus himself was received under the protection of the justice, not only on account of his youth, but also because the boy had led his new patron to believe that his life would be in danger from the vengeance of the gypsey fraternity.

Theophilus conducted himself for some time with the greatest circumspection. He had, indeed, so won upon his patron, that the latter exerted himself to discover the parents of his protegé. Such an event, however, was not very probable, as the story had no better foundation than what the brain of Theophilus himself could supply. However, his end was so far answered,

that the suspicions to which his former habits and recent situation had given rise, gradually disappeared. The hand of kindness was held out to him, and it was his own fault that every opportunity for his advancement was not afforded him.

But the future Rector of Bingwood thought perhaps in the same way with the philosopher, who maintained that there was a short cut to the intellectual regions; and judged that the road to honours and distinctions was equally concise. But let his motives be what they may, the result will speak for itself. He had contrived to worm himself into trust and confidence; and his first step at obtaining them was to abuse them. His patron discovered the elopement of Theophilus by the state of his bureau, which was emptied of all its portable contents, including a considerable sum of ready money, and some valuable trinkets.

The next public appearance of Theophilus was on the death of his former patron. He had indulged in privacy till he was enabled to venture forth, without fear of contributing to the general entertainment, by an exhibition of himself at the bar of a court of justice. How this interval of his life, which lasted about twelve years, was filled up, can be only known to himself; but, on his emerging from obscurity, he was installed into the office of valet de chambre and principal pimp to the Earl of Scuttlebone.

The deranged state of the noble Earl's affairs, imperiously called, not only for retrenchment and economy, but also for reparation. The latter was obtained by exchanging nobility for ready cash, through the medium of marriage. The dismissal of the reigning sultana was, however, a point insisted upon, as well as a reform in the establishment.

The Earl was not in a situation to refuse compliance with any conditions which were demanded of him. The only two persons who could give him any disturbance were, his mistress and his pimp. The most natural course was to unite their interests together, and to make the same provision serve for both. The Earl sounded his valet, who consented to receive the lady, for better and for worse, in case the Earl would procure him to be ordained, and would settle an annuity upon him, until he provided him with a living of at least four hundred a year.

As Lord Scuttlebone's interest, both in church and state, were considerable, he was charmed with the moderation of his attendant. Dispatching him therefore into the country, he soon became a deacon. The great difficulty was now past. His lordship, who was a man of the strictest honour, put his

hand to the annuity deed, and Bubbleby, who on this occasion was no less a man of honour, espoused the lady.

In due time, he was placed in a state to receive the first living which should enable his lordship to cancel the annuity deed. In the mean while, the merits of the new clergyman had spread far and wide, and had been sufficient to induce one of the Scotch colleges to transmit him a diploma, which allowed him to place L. L. D. to the end of his name, simply upon the payment of some trifling fees.

Mrs. Bubbleby had considerable claims upon the kindness of her late protector; it was therefore with pleasure that his Lordship saw her treated with marks of outward attention, by the husband assigned to her. The conduct of Bubbleby was indeed exemplary, until, by the interest of his patron, who exerted his influence to the

utmost, he obtained a living of a greater value than was agreed upon.

The Doctor then threw off the mask, and treated his wife with the greatest inhumanity, never addressing her but by the most opprobrious epithets. Her spirits sunk under a series of ill usage, and she tacitly suffered herself to be driven to a state of absolute seclusion, assigning as a reason, according to the mandate of the Doctor, the love of retirement.

As the Doctor's living was in a part of Yorkshire not much frequented by those who, from previous knowledge, could cast a slur upon his character, he was enabled to make his way in his new neighbourhood, and to assume an air of respectability. But as the immediate vicinity of his living did not allow a full scope for his talents, or hold out to him the hopes of farther preferment, he usually indulged himself in excur-

sions to places of public resort, with a view of insinuating himself into the good graces of such as were likely to forward him in the profession which he had chosen. How well he succeeded with me, I have already mentioned; but I never learnt that he was equally successful with any one else. Probably the dread of discovery kept him aloof from playing a deep game. He had been, however, fortunate in some minor speculations, and had received solid testimonies of esteem, in the form of legacies, from several *valued friends*.

On his taking up his residence at Bingwood, he had brought his wife *pro forma*, and had shown her for a few days; but she was soon consigned to her obscurity, leaving the Doctor free and uncontrolled. Mrs. Bubbleby, he told every body, was so attached to her former place of residence, that she was averse to leaving it; and he loved her too dearly to oppose her wishes:

but necessity compelled him to remain a certain time at Bingwood, and consequently to act in a manner totally dissonant to his warmest wishes.

I imagine that when I had the pleasure of seeing Mrs. Dunder, and Mr. Purry, they were in training for a thumping legacy. As to Miss Lavinia, she was perhaps intended for a second Mrs. Bubbleby, in case the Doctor had been fortunate enough to have got rid of the first. But Mrs. Bubbleby's heart was proof against all the attempts of the Doctor to break it, and she managed to live in spite of insult and ill usage.

By the same means which have enabled me to give "some account" of the Doctor, I learnt that he was not more successful either with the widow or the West Indian. The former, shortly after her visit to Bingwood, having married her footman, to the great joy of the party-coloured race, taking care, in the first place, to secure her property

to her own disposal. The friends of the lady were grievously offended at her choice; but this she professed to wonder at, seeing that he was a promising young man. His progress on the fiddle, when he had only been two months a student, being a striking mark of what his natural genius could surmount, when his mind was properly directed in a course of genteel accomplishments.

With Mr. Purry the Doctor was still more unlucky; for the old bachelor for several years paid an autumnal visit to Bingwood; but on the first hint of expectations, the friendship which had united their kindred souls together, was instantly snapt. The Doctor's hopes were entirely blighted, and the fortune which the West Indian proposed to divide among his mulatto progeny remained untouched.

Mr. Purry's feelings, however, were not over-nice; and it was some time before he could understand the nu-

merous hints of the Doctor, that his room was preferable to his company. At last the Doctor succeeded, by requesting the loan of two hundred pounds on his note for five years. This had the desired effect. Mr. Purry, who had just been boasting of his riches, now had not a shilling that he could call his own; and notwithstanding he had expressed his intention of remaining at Bingwood till after Christmas, he was suddenly summoned to town upon indispensible business. The Doctor chuckled at the success of his stratagem. The dear friends parted, to meet—as strangers.

CHAP. VI.

PRESUMPTIVE EVIDENCE.

IN the regular course of events, I ought perhaps to put upon record some further "account" of the beings who were congregated under my roof. I can recollect some expressions of the Earl of Cullymore, which disgusted me, and some verbal quibbles from the reverend Doctor which sickened me. As to the rest of the party, they were to all intents and purposes neutral. The occurrences of the day, as they did not afford me the slightest portion of amusement, though present, are not

likely to yield entertainment to those who were absent. I shall therefore dismiss my friends to the parsonage, and the Earl of Cullymore to his downy couch, without the smallest portion of regret, and continue my story.

At the time of my marriage, and pending the arrangement of my household, I had made use of all my interest, and had succeeded in having Giles installed into the office of butler. This was not accomplished without a very considerable opposition on the part of Lady Erpingham, and her confidential advisers, who all expressed themselves unwilling that a post of such trust and confidence should be yielded to a person who had nothing but my recommendation in his favour. As it was the only point on which I showed any symptoms of obstinacy, it was graciously acceded to me, on condition, however, that I was never to interfere hereafter, either directly or indirectly,

in any future arrangements which might seem good unto the Countess. I agreed generally to the terms, which were reduced to writing, to prevent the possibility of any mistake. The dismissal of my valet was the first act of the arbitrary power thus obtained. His crime was an offence, of what nature I was never informed, against her ladyship's maid. I remonstrated; but the articles between us convinced me that I must submit. This I did with a very ill grace, but it was inevitable. As I had no great inclination, however, for a servant of her ladyship's choosing, to be immediately about my person, I purchased the right of nominating my own domestic by some further concessions, her ladyship still reserving to herself the right of dismission.

Of the fidelity and attachment of Giles, I had never entertained the smallest doubt; and had any further proofs of his regard been needful, they

would have been found in his quitting his "darling" stable, at my solicitation, to take upon himself the superintendance of the wine and plate; and likewise at his quitting a situation of ease, comfort, and regularity, which he had filled, even to the satisfaction of Lady Erpingham, when I wholly severed my establishment from that of my wife. Giles then was reinstated in his former post, and cheerfully resumed his double capacity of groom and valet.

About a week after I had been at Bingwood, one of the footmen, after much circumlocution, and numberless professions of sorrow at having an invidious duty imposed upon him, but which his strict ideas of honesty, no less than his regard for my welfare rendered unavoidable, told me that he strongly suspected Giles of having converted to his own use a considerable quantity of plate, and other valuable

property. Aware that Giles had given up his late trust with the highest character for honesty and integrity from Lady Erpingham herself, who, notwithstanding his having belonged to me, would willingly have detained him, I treated the information in the way it really merited, and, as at first, I thought it really deserved.

But when the ruin of an individual is determined upon, proofs can always be showered thick as hail. To one who had suffered, as I had done, from misplaced confidence, " trifles light as air" were calculated to appear in the light of " confirmation strong as holy writ." Although I openly repelled the insinuation, it did not fail of making a due impression upon a mind awake to suspicion. I despised the tale-bearer, but at the same time I did not disregard the tale; and on hearing assurances from other quarters, which corroborated the testimony of the first informer, I

considered that it was high time to institute a strict enquiry into the assertions which had been made, with the intent of leading to the total exculpation of Giles, or as I dreaded, to his condemnation.

With a view of making the honesty of Giles stand or fall by the circumstances which could be momentarily developed, I dispatched him upon a sleeveless errand, which would occupy the whole day, in order that in the presence of the housekeeper and of the footman, who had first awakend my suspicions, I might proceed unmolested in my search. We carefully examined his pantry, of which he kept the key, by means of a set of picklocks, which the footman pretended to have found in the bed-room of Giles, but which his dexterity in their application ought to have convinced me, that they belonged to himself. Nothing, however, was discoverable; every thing appeared

regular in the extreme; nor was there anything which indicated the slightest approach to guilt or concealment. From the pantry we adjourned to Giles's bed-chamber. The same means which enabled me to ascertain the honesty of Giles in his pantry, served to discover his *dis*honesty elsewhere. To my astonishment, as well as to my regret, in one of his boxes I perceived one of my largest table-cloths cut into four pieces, together with a watch which I valued and cherished because it had been admired by Lydia Berrington, and several articles of plate, of a description which my usual habits of living did not render necessary to my table.

In addition to what I saw before me, I was told that Giles had forwarded a heavy box by the waggon, directed to the sister of his mother, who lived in the neighbourhood of Whitechapel.

I could no longer doubt the evidence of my own senses, and was determined

to punish this further breach of my confidence in an exemplary manner; more particularly as I detected the hypocrisy of Giles, who on many occasions, had exposed, without mercy, the delinquencies of several of the minor domestics, and had procured their dismissal with disgrace, and loss of character. I recalled these occurrences to my mind, in order that my previous regard might not tempt me to swerve from the line of conduct, which I considered myself called upon to adopt; not only as an injured individual, but as a person whose station in life required him to hold out an example of justice and decision.

I ordered the box to be carefully replaced, and its contents laid in the same manner as when we opened it. My next step was to attend a neighbouring justice of peace, in order to procure the requisite assistance in tracing the box which was transmitted to

Giles's aunt. The deposition of the footman was taken, and proper notice of the box, and of its direction, was sent to the police offices in London. It was seized at the moment of its delivery at the place of its destination, and after an inventory of its contents was taken, it was returned to me at Bingwood.

The box contained plate and valuables to a considerable amount, and were altogether of a description of which apparently he, and he alone, could have got into his possession. To make the matter more certain, and to place his guilt beyond the possibility of dispute, the direction to his aunt which was affixed to the box, was in his own hand-writing.

The box from London, and that in his room, in which my property had been discovered, I desired might be brought into my study. On the return of Giles I asked him to empty the con-

tents of both boxes on the floor. He obeyed without the least hesitation or embarrassment.

He gazed with astonishment at the scene before him, but certainly betrayed no symptoms of guilt. He looked from one thing to another, until at last casting his eyes upon the direction of the box which had been forwarded to London, and recognizing his hand writing, he exclaimed, " Christ, who has done this ! What can I say, my Lord? How shall I obtain belief! But as God shall hear me I am innocent!"

His look and manner disarmed me. I considered him to be guilty, but I was far from being sorry that there was no witness to our conference.

" There is no occasion," said I, " to add falsehood to your crimes. Your acts speak but too plainly for themselves. They are of a nature which admit of no explanation. But we have

drawn our subsistence from the same breast,—that consideration, and that alone, saves you from the horrors of ignominious proceedings. Think yourself fortunate that you meet with lenity when justice is all that your crimes could expect. Your arrears of wages, be they what they may, shall be forwarded to your mother. You may remove your clothes; it can be done immediately. It will then be your interest to place yourself where we may never meet again. You are now safe, but I will not answer for your safety eight and forty hours hence."

"My Lord," cried the poor wretch, falling on his knees with a look which implored for mercy and forgiveness, "there is a power above that can read all hearts,——mine——"

"Begone! another moment and the consequences may be fatal."

I applied my hand to the bell—Giles clasped his hands together in despair

and rushed out of the room. He immediately left the house, but I gave directions that whatever belonged to him should be sent to his mothers', to whom, notwithstanding my rage I was desirous of softening down her son's deliquency, and for that purpose gave the servants to understand that a mention of what had passed would be far from meeting my approbation. Perhaps I took the most effectual method of making the circumstances known. At all events the disgrace of Giles and the causes which led to it were not only well known but were magnified out of all reasonable proportion.

The exit of poor Giles was witnessed by the other servants, and particularly by the footman who had lodged the information against him, with a sort of malignant joy. I confess I did not feel exactly satisfied with myself, but I did not see that I could have acted otherwise in the face of such incontrovertible

evidence. Giles was not popular among his fellow servants. This I used to attribute to his fidelity towards his master, although I will do him the justice to say that he never complained of a fellow servant till all hopes of amendment by means of persuasion were ineffectual. His word with me was law. I therefore felt doubly hurt at being again betrayed.

As a reward for the honesty and integrity of the footman who had been the accuser of Giles, I promoted him to the situation which the dismissal of the latter had left vacant. My penetration was never sufficient to guard me against imposition. The merits of a person who discovered a cheat which had been practised upon me, were undoubted, although they sometimes acted upon me in different ways. If the discovery redounded to my shame, I became an irreconcileable foe to the discoverers; on the other hand, if no dis-

credit was attached to it, I wanted no other recommendation to become a warm friend.

Giles's mother came to me in the deepest distress — she begged, she pleaded, and she protested his innocence. She besought me, by the affection she had always borne me, to sift the affair to the bottom, convinced that the result would clear her son from the vile imputations which were every where heaped upon him. Giles, she declared, was as innocent as the babe unborn. He was incapable of abusing my confidence, or of wronging me in the slightest degree. He had been a victim to the malice of his fellow-servants, who wished to rid me of a faithful attendant, in order that they might rob me with impunity, and without the fear of detection.

Her agony supplied her with eloquence; and had the proofs been of a common description, or of a nature

to admit of explanation, she might, perhaps, have succeeded. I was about to yield to the possibility of her suggestions, and to turn in my mind what motives he could have for his conduct. The servants were certainly as likely to try to rid themselves of Giles, as Giles was likely to swerve from the path of honesty. My opinion was beginning to waver, and had nothing appeared to counteract the favourable impression I was preparing myself to entertain, the scale would have turned in his favour; and, in spite of evidence which would have satisfied a jury, I was half inclined to agree with the mother, that Giles had been the victim of malice. But my eye accidently glanced upon the direction of the box, which even Giles himself had acknowledged to be in his own hand-writing. I showed it to the mother. She was thunderstruck. Her

eyes dropped towards the ground, and she was silent.

As the mother could allege nothing further in his defence, but on the contrary, seemed satisfied with his guilt, my task was comparatively easy, although it was not without some painful sensations, that I closed the subject in a way that I felt due to my character and consequence, as the head of a family. To have forgiven dishonesty in one instance, would have been the effectual means of laying myself open to depredations of every description. Perhaps I enter more at large upon this point than necessity requires; but, as the result proved me to be deceived, I am anxious to extenuate the harshness of my behaviour, particularly to the unoffending mother, against whom no charge certainly existed.

I dismissed the mother with the fol-

lowing words—" Send your son where he can provide for himself. His clothes shall be sent to him, and you yourself may now receive his wages. At present he is secure. He shall even enjoy the fruits of former dishonesty unmolested—but henceforward let me hear no more of him. The first time his name escapes your lips, in my presence, will be the last. Your annuity will be the penalty of a departure from this injunction."

The poor old creature shook her head as I put her son's wages into her hand. She would have declined receiving it, but I insisted. Fetching a deep sigh, she departed broken-hearted.

CHAP. VII.

POSITIVE PROOF.

AS I am beginning a new chapter with the Earl of Cullymore upon my hands, it is incumbent upon me to get rid of him in some way or other. This in reality was attended with no small portion of difficulty. In the present case I can easily dismiss him, and shall take the present opportunity of soon doing so, in order that he may give me no farther trouble.

Lord Cullymore passed the first night at Bingwood in his way to Snufflton park. The second night he yield-

ed to my solicitations of assisting me in the amusement of Doctor Bubbleby and his friends. For the third, fourth, fifth, and all the subsequent nights for the three months, in which he honoured Bingwood with his presence, I had nothing to thank but his own inclination and convenience. Perhaps the Earl had no taste for artificial volcanoes, or perhaps.——But at Bingwood he staid, even after I had left it for the winter season.

His stay, however, interfered but little with my own arrangements; he desired me to stand upon no ceremony with him. The country was delightful, he was charmed with it, and could not think of quitting it. He made himself so perfectly at home, in every respect, that it sometimes happened, we never met for a whole week together. The Earl was frequently kind enough to invite friends to meet *him*, and he occasionally did me the honour

of requesting my company to join them. This I invariably declined in the hope, a vain one indeed, of shaming him into quitting a place where my conduct must have convinced him he was far from welcome. However, I will do him the justice to say that he never molested me in the slightest degree. He kindly left me in the entire possession of the suit of apartments, which I usually inhabited, and quietly fixed himself in a range of rooms in a different part of the abbey. He saved me the trouble of giving any orders for him, by giving them himself, and I do not doubt if the winter with its dullness had not driven him away, he would have staid till doomsday, in case he had so long preserved himself from the fangs of the grave digger. All I have, therefore, to do in this case is to take my final leave of his Lordship, as of a person with whom for the future

I am to be considered as wholly unconnected.

With Giles I had felt myself again deceived, in spite of all my pretended foresight. The amount of the deception, indeed, compared with former occasions was hardly worth observing, but it was still deception, and being so, it galled me.

I had often heard of the vast advantage of practical over theoretical knowledge, and was now convinced that experience alone could guard against the snares with which the world abounds. He must be a dolt, indeed, who is vulnerable twice in the same place, and if he *is* twice open to the same deception, it is no matter how often he is exposed to it, or how much he suffers by it. In all such cases, if there is not sense enough to make a madman, there is at all events folly enough to stamp the idiot. Here I can speak boldly, for I can safely declare, that I was

never twice the victim of the same cheat. Villiers, Doctor Bubbleby, Miss Henderson, Mr. Nalder, &c. &c. &c. all passed before me with the order and regularity of Banquo's race of Kings, and although each might bear a strong family resemblance to their great prototype the arch-deceiver, there was no one feature in common between them. In the various species of fraud to which I had been exposed, I may be said to have been inoculated. Once diseased, I was proof against a similar infection. But I beg it to be understood, that in no one case did I ever meet with the mild vaccine treatment. Mine was constantly the variolous, and that of the most inflammatory kind.

But tropes and figures, if they were showered down upon me, would not help me one jot in my story. It is necessary, therefore, if I ever mean to get to an end, that I descend to plain matter of fact. To a man who has

never wandered in the wilds of fiction, or culled the field of illustration, this may be an easy matter, but to one who has got into the midst of a third volume, the case is attended with considerable difficulty, particularly to a person who has never been in the habit of reducing his ideas to the level of a syllogism, or exalting them to the level of an hypothesis. Extremes they say meet, but Heaven only knows what will become of the middle parts when the imagination is once set afloat. But on this point, I appeal to the world at large, in no way committing either myself, or my opinions.

Determined to guard against a similar occurrence, I caused a room of extraordinary strength to be erected. It communicated only with my study, and was composed of materials apparently capable of resisting the attacks of fire, or thieves. I felt pleased with my place of safety, and congratulated my

self on my prudence, when I deposited there the newly received half year's rent of my maternal estates. In addition to this, I caused an inventory to be taken of all my effects, and made the different servants responsible for whatever was committed to their care. Such of my plate as was not likely to be called into immediate use, I likewise placed in my strong room for security.

A few nights after I had thus satisfied myself that I should be enabled to bid defiance to any attacks upon my property, either direct or indirect, I was awoke by an unusual noise in my anti-chamber. No one had access there but the successor of Giles; but I was not allowed time for reflection, for before I could call for assistance, I found myself gagged and bound. A voice which I thought familiar to my ear, demanded the key of the strong room. The only light in the room was emitted

from a dark lanthern, but it was sufficient to enable me to perceive that the faces of those who had seized me, were disguised with crape. The person who demanded the key, was checked by another who pointed to a small cabinet in which I usually deposited it. I had neglected that evening to place it there. A pistol was then applied to my head, with an intimation of the consequences which would certainly follow my withholding the desired information. I pointed to my coat. A third emptied the pockets, and seized the key.

Two of them then crept softly out of the room, and I suppose made their way to my study. The third was left as a guard over me, an office which he performed with a pistol within two inches of my head. With the exception of the first demand, the whole of their proceedings were conducted in perfect silence.

In a few minutes, during which I

hardly breathed, I heard a bustle below stairs. "Curse their stupid heads," was muttered by my guard, but without any change in his position. I then heard footsteps gently creeping towards my room. Two fresh personages entered on tiptoe, disguised in a similar manner, but with the fore finger of one hand across the mouth, and the fore finger of the other hand extended, seemingly directing me to make no noise. In an instant I saw my guard pinioned by his two arms, and the pistol wrenched from his hands. This action was succeeded by the figure of Giles advancing towards me. It had struck me that the parties were well acquainted with the house, and now every thing seemed explained. Giles I thought had taken ample vengeance upon me, for refraining from punishing him as his crimes deserved.

But as usual, I was mistaken, Giles unbound me, and loosened the gag

from my mouth. Still believing him to be criminal, my rage vented itself in reproaches upon him, and I dared him to finish the business he had begun. He made no reply, but taking up some of my clothes, and helping me to half dress myself, he led me to my study. We were followed by the persons, who dragged on my guard.

Lights had been brought, and I found myself in the middle of upwards of a dozen men, all of them armed with bludgeons, and one or two of them with pistols. The three I had at first seen were held by the others. The crape was taken from their faces, and discovered to me the countenances of Villiers, Peters, and the accuser of Giles.

"Now my Lord," said Giles, "who is the guilty person?"

I was thunderstruck, and unable to utter a sound.

"To prison with us," cried Villiers,

"too much time has already been wasted in nonsense."

On examination, I found that the remainder of the assemblage was composed of my tenants and their labourers, whom Giles had brought with him to my preservation. I therefore considered that the villains would be safe for the rest of the night in their custody. In the morning they might be taken before a migistrate and committed at once. I could now punish the crimes of Villiers, without exposing myself or my folly, and I was determined that no human power should release him from my grasp.

But to avoid the possibility of escape, I resolved on no consideration to quit sight of the scoundrels for an instant. The remainder of the night I determined to pass in my study. My clothes were brought down to me, and I dressed in their presence. The necessary refreshment was brought for

the men, in which all partook with the exception of Villiers, who scornfully rejected it.

In the morning I sent to see if Lord Cullymore had been disturbed by the occurrences of the night. Word was brought me that he was no where to be found. His bed had been slept in, but was empty, and none of the servants had seen him go out. I caused fresh search to be made, when he was discovered, with his clothes all rolled up together, under the bed, and laying in as small a space as possible. On being assured that every thing was safe, he ventured forth, and on further hearing that all the robbers were secured, he became as bold as a lion, and offered his assistance in conveying them to a place of confinement. This I declined, and the Earl returned to his usual avocations.

At an early hour we conveyed our prisoners to the nearest magistrate.

They were immediately committed to the county gaol, to take their trial at the next assizes, which as they were at a distance of several months would allow them time for repentance.

Thus ended the last attempt of the scorpion to prey upon me.

Giles naturally looked for his reward, and expected to be re establish-ed in my good opinion. But I had once thought him guilty. There was nothing in what had passed to exculpate him from the charges which had been previously preferred against him. The hand writing upon the box was no less forcible than the hand writing upon the wall. I was willing to give him credit for having saved me on the present occasion, but I rather attributed his interference in this instance to a desire of having the coast left clear to himself, than to any real regard my to welfare. "Honour among thieves," I thought might be a truism,

with the particular individuals of a gang, but where one gang forestalled the labours of another, I imagined that self interest would weigh down all regard for the *honour* of the profession in general.

Poor Giles left me. I do not think I even thanked him for his timely assistance. I was afterwards informed that in a fit of despair, he had entered on board a ship of war, and that he had died of the yellow fever in the West Indies. My giving way to self-reproach would be of no service to the individual whom I certainly wronged; but it was my fate to place a confidence where it was abused, and to refuse it where it was due.



CHAP. VIII.

EXPLANATION.

NOTWITHSTANDING all my care, my victim escaped the hands of justice. His pistols were taken from him and his pockets emptied, but his person was neglected to be searched. Immediately on his arrival at the gaol he had requested that he might be furnished with the materials for writing, and begged that he should be disturbed on no account. The following morning he was found a corpse. A paper which had contained some corrosive powder was laying on the floor. He had been supplied with the regular gaol al-

lowance of bread and water. The former was untouched, but the latter had been drank, and a sediment was found at the bottom of the jug. The body bore evident marks of his having died in great agony. I blamed the gaoler for having left him to himself, and in the possession of the means of self destruction, but it seemed that at his earnest desire he had been conducted to a solitary cell, assigning as a reason that he wished to be undisturbed in what he was about to write.

The person who brought me the intelligence that Villiers was no more, put the following letter into my hand.

"When it is considered that the *wisest* of mankind are liable to self-deception, it cannot be expected that those to whom nature has been less bountiful, should be more fortunate in their career of life. Fate ordained that you should be my dupe, from the first hour of our intercourse, even to my latest breath, for you are disap-

pointed in satiating that spirit of revenge which has never ceased to gnaw upon your heart. I know you well, and I early knew you to be the thing you now begin to suspect yourself. You suited my purpose, or I never should have studied your temper and disposition, but without that study I never could have gained that ascendancy over your mind, which I think you will hardly deny me to have once possessed. You became, indeed, my willing slave, but the instability of your disposition convinced me that my power would be of short duration. Your friendship I knew was ardent, but I was well aware that your hatred would be unbounded. Can you blame me if, under such circumstances, I employed my hours to the best advantage, and that I exerted my influence on every point where I could expect a return for the waste of time, and the use of ability. Your fortune was no-

ble, and it required but little trouble in the situation in which you had placed me, to obtain from you a noble property. My gains were immense. They were far beyond what your imagination can picture to yourself. But with your money, I unfortunately incumbered myself with the folly and improvidence of its former owner. Like yourself I was duped. You may, perhaps, feel a considerable degree of astonishment, at my venturing to make such an assertion to *you*, but you may nevertheless depend upon my veracity, when I inform you that greater rogues than myself are to be found in the world, and you may bless your stars that you fell to my share, instead of being consigned to the merciless fangs of a more complete adept."

"The commission which I received from every tradesman with whom you had any dealings, I considered to be my due. It is what would have been

allowed to your confidental servant, in case I had not usurped the post of "bear-leader." Besides, your only method of estimating the value of things, was in proportion to their cost. It was, therefore, an act of charity in me to encourage a satisfaction, which must instantly have vanished when the real worth was known."

"But independent of the commission I received from the tradesmen, and which, by the bye, in case of accident I generally secured in the first instance, there was a source of emolument of which, most probably, you never entertained a suspicion. You never touched a card or a dice-box, without my previous acquiescence, which was regularly purchased by the fourth part of your losings in all cases, and by a larger proportion whenever I lent my personal aid in fleecing you. You will remember, on one occasion that I questioned the dice. They were

cut open before you, and found perfect. The false dice which had been used, I secreted, and substituted the true ones, which were examined. But these are trifling things. I shall pass, therefore, to the occurrence at —— House. That was a master-piece, and nothing but the immense amount could have awakened suspicion in a mind like yours. The scheme was mine, and by me were the drugs which occasioned your stupefaction, provided. But I was outwitted. My fifth share of the spoil was withheld from me, and I was dared to the exposure. Who would have believed me? Who would have supposed for an instant, that such a circumstance was even possible, much less probable."

"This affair to me was a serious injury, for I not only missed my due, but it had the effect of materially lessening my profits by weaning you entirely from the gaming table. It did

more, for it rendered you suspicious, and I speedily saw that my reign was drawing towards a close. I was fully aware of your sentiments, and well knew that I had no time to lose. On the rent day I saw that I was watched, and pleased myself with the idea of eluding your penetration. The sum of money with which you will allow me to have ingeniously absconded, passed into the hands of the rascally attorney, who took out the writ upon which you was arrested. It was the same man whom the bailiff recommended, and introduced to you. A sudden fit of honesty seized him, and he declared his intention of returning the money to you, rather than to me. He did better with it. You would have wasted it; I should have spent it —— he kept it! I will, however, do him the justice to say, that he acted like a man of honour in facilitating my escape."

"The money I drew from the bankers, I placed in the possession of the person for whom your *carte blanche* was originally intended. It was therefore only applying it to its destined use. With your *friend* Miss Emma Henderson I had long cohabited. By her the money was placed in the hands of a broker, for the purchase of foreign bills. The broker absconded, leaving others in the lurch as well as myself."

"You see how unlucky your property had already been to me, but I have not done yet. By the defalcation of the broker, I was reduced to what remained of my general savings, which, as Miss Henderson was not remarkable for economy, had diminished to only four thousand pounds. With this sum, my companion and myself embarked for Hamburgh."

"It had happened fortunately, that in the contemplation of a flight, I had procured some foreign bills of ex-

change, and a letter of credit, previous to my last journey to Bingwood; I might otherwise have been at a considerable loss as to the means of conveying out of the country the little which remained to me. But my companion knew only of the bills of exchange. You, my Lord, will bear witness to her fascinations, and will therefore duly appreciate the regret which I felt on her leaving me, particularly when you know the mode in which her retreat was conducted. On waking one morning I found myself alone. The lady had given orders that I should on no account be disturbed, as I was extremely unwell. My portmanteau was laying open upon a chair, and on examining its contents, I found that my pocket-book had disappeared. You may perhaps think that I took immediate measures to arrest the progress of the fugitive. But that was far from being the case. I knew the talents

and precautions of the person with whom I had to deal too well, to idly waste my time in a fruitless pursuit. Had we been together, we should have inevitably spent every thing we possessed; and, as it was, she only took her moiety. On the whole, I have no fault to find with her, although I will attribute her only taking the half more to accident than inclination. If she had been assured that she had left me a beggar, I question whether it would have made any alteration in her conduct.

"The money with which the letter of credit supplied me, supported me for a considerable time. As it diminished, I saw the necessity of doing something for a subsistence; but my indolence proved a bar to any active exertions. I visited various parts of the continent, and looked in all directions to find your equal; but I will own that I was not very sanguine in

my expectations. Such a personage is of rare occurrence. Indeed, my Lord, I do not flatter you. Such a combination as centred in yourself, is seldom to be met with. The world, it is true, abounds with fools, and exuberates with madmen; but it rarely happens that they have been equal favorites of fortune with yourself. About your Lordship there was something peculiar, and that something I cannot describe. At all events, it appears that you were predestined to be cheated, and that I was predestined to cheat you.

"The abilities which were the means of ushering me into high life, had grown rusty for want of use, and, according to the state of my pockets, I passed through all the different stages, from the gentleman to the beggar. You parted from me under the appearance of the first, and you again met me in the character of the second. I was starving; for even among beggars there

are favourites of fortune. Your charity might have been well applied; but the consistency of your character was strictly preserved, and you refused me.

"I was satisfied that it was Giles who first opened your eyes to my conduct, and I never forgave him. You might, indeed, have heard a similar account from every one of your servants; but your blind confidence, your obstinacy, and your pride, kept them at such an immeasureable distance, that they rejoiced rather than otherwise, at the downfal which they saw was approaching.

"You are, I know, incapable of much feeling; but you will, nevertheless, blame your hastiness, when you are told, on the word of a dying man, that Giles was, in every respect, completely innocent. His accuser, who is the brother of Peters, by the same means in which he effected the dis-

covery, deposited the articles which Giles was suspected to have stolen, in the box of the latter. In a similar manner he purloined the goods which were sent to the aunt's in London. The direction, which gave the appearance of truth to the whole affair, was cut off from a letter which Giles had given to the younger Peters, for the purpose of having it conveyed to the post-office. The letter contained a small remittance, which supplied us with the means of procuring the necessary implements to put our design into execution. With the subsequent business you are already informed.

"How Giles became acquainted with our intentions, so as to frustrate them so completely, I know not, neither do I care. I saw him once since his dismissal, when I was lurking about the park, in company with Peters. It struck me that he recognized us, in despite of the rags, which formed our

only covering. If he did, his conduct can be readily accounted for.

"Farewell. Life without the means of subsistence is insupportable. I am only now parting with what I every day dreaded to lose by starvation, and I die with the satisfaction, that I shall be safely removed beyond the reach of your vengeance."

Contrary to my former maxims, I believe that if I could have seen Giles at the moment, when my conscience was reproaching me for the injustice I had committed towards him, I should have endeavoured to have made him some amends for his unmerited sufferings. But as he had taken his departure before I was undeceived, the secret monitor got less and less troublesome, and I was even cruel enough to suffer the unhappy mother to continue in an error, rather than own myself to have been imposed upon.

Peters and his brother were tried at the ensuing assizes, and being found guilty, upon the clearest evidence, were executed. They severally requested to have a personal interview with me; but I had heard enough. I was, in fact, too thoroughly sick of my own folly to listen to any thing upon the subject.



CHAP. IX.

A WINTER'S TALE.

THE life of a person who has been placed by fortune in a situation where active pursuits, if followed at all, are the consequences of choice, and not of necessity; and who, in the disposal of his time, has no other guide than the dictates of his own fancy, presents but little variety. Ambition may make a favourite of fortune desirous of power; and the history of such a man may become interwoven with the events of his country. Still, however, the part which he plays has more in it of a

public than of a private nature. The statesman, out of his routine of office, varies but little from such of his contemporaries as inclination or circumstances have placed in a more quiet sphere of action; and on the relation of occurrences which are strictly of a personal description, the resemblance between them is much greater than is commonly imagined. I do not mean to infer that the hours of privacy are, in *all* ministerial cases, whatever they may be in some of those cases, spent in a manner equally frivolous with the hours of the decided idler by profession; but I am certain, that the world at large would derive no more good from the relation of what passes with the one, than what happens to the other.

Of what importance can it possibly be, either to the present race, or to succeeding generations, at what specific hours fashion had ordained

that the several occupations of a life of nothingness should be performed. Whether a coat be distended with buckram, with the *packet*, as my Lord Foppington calls it, at the calf of the leg, or whether it be suffered to descend downwards by its own natural gravity. By the bye, when we consider what our soldiers have done since they have totally lost their skirts, it appears wonderful how the victories of Marlborough were atchieved, encumbered as were his men with such a load of unnecessary trappings. At all events, it upholds my argument, that external arrangements can effect little alteration in the internal man. Whether the hour of dinner be at three or nine, is likewise unimportant; and it may be averred, that a celebrated duchess was not more out of the way, in inviting a late Premier to dine with her at ten, than the Premier was in urging

a prior engagement to *sup* with a reverend prelate at nine.

The difference between the man who, in the days of his youth, endeavoured to form himself upon the model of Sir Charles Grandison, and who, like his prototype, never stirred abroad but in a sedan chair, and the crop-eared puppy of the present day, who minces through St. James's Street, is too minute to be perceptible. The life of the one is as vapid and tasteless as that of the other.

If, to his other qualifications, a man adds the manners of a debauchee, he may indeed enliven his tale with exploits committed, or rather, which is most commonly the case, exploits which he is desirous of being supposed to have committed, in the hours, or under the influence of drunkenness; or, perhaps he may favour his auditors with the relation of stratagems extraordinary

employed in the seduction of innocence. And if he soars to a higher niche in the pinnacle of fame, and wishes to be recorded as a man of intrigue, he may descant on his hair-breadth escapes from the fangs of a jealous husband, and may tell of the immensity of trouble it occasioned him to undermine the affections of the wife. In either capacity, he may glory in his deeds; but in both he is despicable, and must, sooner or later, find himself called upon to account for his crimes, if he has committed them in reality, and for his falsehoods, if he has been criminal no further than in sacrificing the character and feelings of others to empty boastings.

He who acts from the impulse of the moment, has some excuse to allege for his follies, and even for his vices. If nature has formed him with a temperament sanguine and occasionally beyond the powers of control, many al-

lowances can be made for acts which his better judgment, the result of sober reflection, would condemn. But his recital of them is not to be pardoned. It adds premeditation of crime to culpability. For myself, I have never laid claims to peculiar sanctity; but it ill becomes the hand of age to trace the levities of youth. The recollection of many things, which in the early part of life excited pleasurable sensations, in the vale of years can raise no feeling but that of disgust.

With these impressions operating with full force upon my mind, the reader will not be surprized on finding a considerable *hiatus* in my narrative. Perhaps he is in some measure prepared for it by the title of my work, which unquestionably allows me to make what omissions I may think proper. Two persons may certainly pursue the same method of telling a story, without subjecting either to the

imputation of plagiarism. If Shakespeare had *not* sunk the interval between the birth and maturity of Perdita, I should, most infallibly, have passed over nearly the same portion of time in relating the occurrences which happened in my own family. But, notwithstanding the writings of our immortal bard are in the hands of every one, and are most mercilessly mangled when they can be made of the least service, I have another ground on which I can call for acquittal—to copy Shakespeare is to copy nature. A logician may probably chuse to extend the argument *vice versa.* In that case the charge may surely be dismissed.

In the course of my narrative, I have mentioned two events, which, although they excited but little interest at the time they took place, and for a very considerable while after, were fated to furnish me with employment during

several subsequent years of my life. The events I allude to, were the birth of a son and daughter.

Their infancy was passed in the nursery of Erpingham Hall, and their childhood, during the residence there of Lady Erpingham, in the school-room of the same. When the mother was absent they ranged the house and park at pleasure, her ladyship's departure being the signal for the children to throw off the control of those to whose care they were entrusted. They never were permitted to see any of the personages whom the countess invited to her mansion, nor were they seen by any but their own immediate attendants. Lady Erpingham usually, I believe, required their presence in her dressing-room, once at least in the the course of a year, but that I apprehended was merely for form's sake. Beyond that, I do not imagine she ever

enquired after them, or even thought of them, unless they were forced upon her attention.

It may appear remarkable, satisfied as I must naturally have been of the bad consequences which must inevitably have resulted from a course of education similar to that which had been adopted in my own case, that I should suffer the same prejudicial system to be pursued with my son. But I fear the charge of negligence will lay as heavily on me as on Lady Erpingham. Before my son had passed his sixteenth year, and his sister her fifteenth, I had only seen them four times, and even those four times were before the eldest was three years old. For thirteen years, therefore, I had left them to their fate, to scramble on as they could. The boy was consigned to a tutor as soon as he left the nursery, and the girl, in like manner, was placed under the superintendance

of a governess. The recommendation of both the preceptor and preceptress, in the eyes of Lady Erpingham, was their having filled similar situations in families of great antiquity. This was, indeed, their only recommendation, as Mr. Croucher's former charge had turned out one of the greatest numskuls in the creation, and as Miss Twaddler's last pupil had been detected in an intrigue with the under butler.

Lady Erpingham was, however, perfectly satisfied with the advancement of her offspring, so long as she neither heard complaints either from them, or from their instructors against them. Indeed I will do her the justice to say, that even complaints did not make any great impression to the prejudice of the party complained of; it being her invariable practice to dismiss the complainant with severe indications of her displeasure, and with a solemn

warning to avoid a repetition of the offence. The consequences were such as might have been naturally expected. The quartetto entered into tacit articles of agreement, that neither should, on any account, or in any way, molest either of the others. Mr. Croucher and Miss Twaddler, I imagine, sought for comfort in each other, while the Lord Viscount Winterbourne was permitted to follow his inclinations in making companions of the stable boys, and Lady Caroline Monkton was encouraged to romp with the housemaids and footmen. When the Countess was in sight, or within hearing, in all cases excepted, for on those occasions a sense of self-interest induced all the four to be a little careful of their behaviour.

But the opinion of the world was every thing to Lady Erpingham. Before I go any further, however, I think some explanation may be necessary to

qualify the last expression, and to reconcile it with some former remarks, which at first sight may appear to be at variance with it. Now although Lady Erpingham had scarcely an idea beyond a pedigree, or any motive of action indepeudent of empty state, and was, moreover, regardless of the opinion of what is commonly called the world, yet there were points and maxims which have been adhered to by persons of family, with an inflexibility, unalterable as the laws of the Medes and Persians, and to which Lady Erpingham, of necessity, conformed. Every person who applies the term world in the sense which I now use it, means, I apprehend, to include all those whose good opinion he is desirous of cultivating, without looking out of his immediate sphere of action, and without comprehending such of the remaining parts of mankind, as are situated too high, too low,

or at too great a distance to bias the particular mode of behaviour adapted to his station. Thus, the world of a chimney-sweeper is limited to the dealers in soot; and the world of Lady Erpingham was confined to families of equal antiquity with her own.

As it had been the custom, therefore, in all old families, to give the female branches an opportunity of being sought in marriage; and as Lady Erpingham prided herself upon her propriety of conduct, or in other words, as the "opinion of the world was every thing to her," the world, that is, in her case, all persons of family, would have cried out shame, if, when her daughter had reached the prescribed age, her public introduction into life had been delayed.

Soon after Lady Caroline had passed her fifteenth year, she was summoned to London; and as her brother was

still older, it was judged expedient that he should accompany her. They had been in town a full week, and had been exhibited, in all directions, before I even knew of their arrival. The intelligence was conveyed to me by the congratulations of an acquaintance, who felicitated me on being father to so accomplished and beautiful a young woman as Lady Caroline Monkton, and to so promising a youth as Lord Winterbourne.

I made my acknowledgments for the compliment which was paid to me through the medium of my family; but as I was ignorant of the means by which my friend had obtained his information, I shaped my reply as well as I could, to gain a further knowledge, without betraying my ignorance. I was successful; my friend enumerated all the places in which they had been visible. I must say, that I thought it would not have been amiss to have

consulted me, or at least to have given me to understand what the intentions were. But as I had no power to help myself, I made the best of my situation.

CHAP. X.

A MAN OF BUSINESS.

I HAD now arrived at a period of life when rest becomes desirable. My constitution had been much injured by a course of what is termed "free living," and I began to feel symptoms of premature old age. My excesses of late years had indeed been more calculated to injure my health than my purse, for I had managed to live within the income of that part of my property which I could still call my own. It was not possible for me to have entertained a direct hatred towards Lady

Erpingham, for I had never loved her. She was decidedly unpleasant to me, but she was still the mother of my children, and judging from experience I felt the immense importance of a father's sanction on their entrance into the world.

Under these impressions as soon as I had digested the information I had just received of my son and daughter being with their mother, I wrote to Lady Erpingham, to suggest to her the propriety, for the sake of the children's future welfare in life, of our appearing openly to the world as man and wife. I positively disclaimed all idea of interfering with the routine to which she had invariably accustomed herself, but I ventured to submit to her consideration, whether a daughter's establishment in marriage would not be likely to be more effectually and more advantageously secured under a father's eye, and also whether a father's autho-

rity might not conduce to the prevention of many irregularities on the part of a son, whose rank in life and future prospects would put him above the control of every other person. I concluded with requesting an early attentention to the subject on the part of her Ladyship, and with assurances of unaltered and unalterable esteem and regard. The last part of the letter was, it is true, mere matter of course, but I recollect that in the middle of the sentence something rose in my throat which almost choked me.

The ensuing day I was favoured with the following note in reply,

"Miss Toadeater has received the commands of the Right Honourable the Countess of Erpingham, &c. &c. to present the compliments of her Ladyship to the Right Honourable the Earl of Erpingham, &c. &c. His Lordship's note of yesterday was duly laid before her Ladyship, and by her

Ladyship's direction has been transmitted, together with her Ladyship's, instructions, to Mr. Frill, of —— street, her Ladyship's solicitor, with whom the Earl of Erpingham will please to communicate upon the subject. Miss Toadeater requests the Earl of Erpingham to accept the assurances of her high consideration."

I perused this delectable note again and again. As it was the first written communication I had ever received from her Ladyship, either by deputy or otherwise, I could not, by comparing it with any former productions from the same quarter, ascertain in what frame of mind her Ladyship happened to be when she directed the pen of her secretary. But it was the Countess of Erpingham with whom I had to deal, and that ought to have lessened any surprize I might have felt, if not dissipated surprize altogether.

But having once brought myself to

consider the superintendance of my children as a duty incumbent upon me, I was resolved not to permit their future well-being to be sacrificed to idle punctilio, particularly as I was by no means anxious to engage in any personal intercourse with Lady Erpingham, further than was absolutely necessary to carry into effect the ends which I had in view. I did, indeed, think that Mr. Frill might almost as well have been the bearer of her Ladyship's will and pleasure, and thus have saved me the trouble of seeking him. I soon found, however, that Mr. Frill, the solicitor not only to Lady Erpingham, but to several other persons of distinction, was a personage of far greater consequence than the Earl of Erpingham.

Anxious to lose no time, on the receipt of Miss Toadeater's epistle I walked to Mr. Frill's office, and was ushered to a seat in the room allotted

to the clerks. I sent in my name, which I had previously flattered myself was sufficient to procure me instant admission, or at least a removal to a more agreeable place. But my vanity was destined to experience a rebuke; the clerk, after waiting several minutes, returned to me as the bearer of Mr. Frill's compliments.—Mr. Frill was at that time most particularly engaged on an affair of immense importance, but if I would have the goodness to wait, he hoped to be at leisure in about a couple of hours, or he would attend *at his office* to any appointment I would please to make for the following day.

Thus two days of the negociation passed away, and I had made no further progress than in receiving by deputy the compliments of an attorney and of my own wife. They who are of a superstitious turn, and apt to be affected by omens, would have augured ill from so unpropitious a commence-

ment and I think it must be allowed that I gave the most indubitable proofs of my courage and perseverance, that I did not instantly desist from any further attempt.

Not willing to run the risk of a second fruitless errand I chose the hour of one on the succeeding day. For almost the first time in my life, I was punctual. St. George's church clock struck as I applied my hand to the office bell. I was admitted into the same dirty office, and after waiting a full half hour was ushered into the august presence of Mr. Frill himself. As I entered the room Mr. Frill was just taking leave of a young man, who closed a familiar discourse with "Well, Frilly, I'm off," and then assuming a theatrical tone and corresponding attitude, exclaimed "remember twelve!"

Mr. Frill apologized for having detained me so long, protesting that nothing but business of a most indispen-

able nature could have made him an unwilling trespasser upon my good-nature. But he was ever in a hurry, and really he was so torn to pieces that he had not a moment's time which he could call his own.

"How I envy the man of independence, my Lord," continued the man of law. "How delightful to be enabled to follow pursuits which are congenial to one's inclination! But a public man must be the slave to the public. I have received within these two hours, my Lord, no less than ten letters desiring appointments. Indeed being concerned for some of the first nobility, I have been under the necessity of declining all connexion with commoners, and I can assure you, my lord, that I am compelled to refuse having any personal intercourse with such as are not titled. The Duchess Dowager of Dolittle, the Duke of Hammersmith, and the Marquis of Twaddleham have been

worrying me to death this morning respecting the claims of the Earl of Wapping upon the Pentweazle property which is at present enjoyed by the Dowager, the Dutchess of Hammersmith, and the Marchioness of Twaddleham, as co-heiresses of the late Sir Jeffrey Dunstan, by whom the property was claimed in right of his great grandmother. I have but little time to devote to your Lordship, as I expect the Marquis of Crump at two to consult upon the marriage articles between Lord Jeremiah Dumpy, his Lordship's second son, and Lady Keziah Ganderpool. At three I must be with Lord Viscount Badger, who is obliged to take up another twenty thousand from Jew Issachar upon annuity. This is totally against my custom, for with my extensive business, I can only see my clients here unless as a friend, but Badger is laid up with the gout and has sent me word, that if I do not come, his

disorder will certainly fly to his stomach. You see, my Lord, a lawyer of reputation is sometimes better than a doctor. Your Lordship was of course at Lady Hedgehog's masquerade last night. But it would be insulting to a man of your Lordship's taste to suppose that you could be absent from such a superb *spectacle.*—Prodigious company.—The Dutchess of Limberham whispered in my ear that Lord Simon Horsemagog was the best mask she had ever seen. The Dutchess is a sweet woman.—The Duke will certainly carry the county of —— at the next general election. But let us proceed to business.—Oh! here is your Lorships's letter to Lady Erpingham.—Lady Caroline Monkton is a charming creature; the picture of her lovely mother.—You have been a happy man, my Lord. Left so early at your own disposal with such an immense property. Regret that in your difficulties, a few years back, I had not

the honour of being your adviser.—Hope soon to have the pleasure of drawing Lady Caroline's marriage articles and of attending her nuptials.—Several promising young noblemen at present in the market. What does your Lordship think of the Marquis of Puddington? to be sure he is a little warped, and his legs a little affected by bad nursing; but he is a sensible clever young man, great genius, exquisite taste, and immense fortune.—The Countess of Paperskull told me———"

How much further this harangue would have proceeded, I cannot determine, but it was interrupted by a clerk, who whispered in Mr. Frill's ear, and immediately departed.

Mr. Frill intreated my pardon for a few seconds, and followed his clerk, assuring me as he went out that it was one of his greatest misfortunes to be continually exposed to interruption.

With Mr. Frill's predecessor in bu-

siness I never had any particular reason to be dissatisfied. He had, indeed, drawn the marriage settlements between Lady Erpingham and myself, by which I was rendered such a complete cypher in every thing which related to my domestic arrangements. But I had no right to grumble; the fault was my own in submitting to such terms, and I could have no one to reproach but myself.

At the time I waited upon Mr. Frill, his former master Mr. Gangrene had been dead about eighteen months. His business and clients had been transfered by his executors soon after his disease to Mr. Frill, who was the son and heir of a Leeds tailor, for a valuable consideration. Mr. Frill had taken possession of Mr. Gangrene's house, and in so doing had insured the connections. It is in this manner that those who style themselves inde-

pendent are transferred from hand to hand like cattle in Smithfield.

I never had any vast opinion of legal advisers, notwithstanding the trust I formerly reposed in Mr. Nalder, but the folly of placing a dependance upon them never struck me so forcibly as upon the present occasion. Lady Erpingham was, however, a lover of regularity, if she could be said to be a lover of any thing. She had been in the habits of consulting Mr. Gangrene, and did not think it possible that her interest could be properly attended to, in any other house than in the one in which he had resided. In this she was by no means singular, for I have occasionally met with persons, in other respects, by no means deficient in sense, who, I am certain, would have considered themselves irretrievably ruined, if they had entrusted their affairs into any other chambers than those occupied from time to time by

the lawyers consulted by their forefathers.

Mr. Frill returned in about a quarter of an hour. He was profuse in his excuses, but his time must be devoted to his clients. Pulling out his watch, he regretted his inability to give me any more of his attention at present. If I would favour him with my company at breakfast to-morrow, he should be happy further to discuss the business in question, satisfied that every thing would be settled to our mutual satisfaction.

I regarded the puppy for some moments with astonishment, in doubt whether impudence, ignorance, or folly, most predominated. At the same time I grasped my cane, feeling an impulse almost irresistible to apply it where I thought it might be of some service. But my prudence in this instance got the better of my passion, and I was content with casting upon him a look

of ineffable contempt. Without deigning to open my lips, I haughtily passed by him, and made my way to the street door.

CHAP. XI.

A FAMILY PARTY.

I HAD seen quite sufficient of Mr. Frill to avoid degrading myself by seeking a second interview, and I verily believe, that to have saved my children, and even my wife into the bargain, from drowning, I should not have been induced to have exchanged another word with him. But as what had passed did not serve to weaken the purpose I had in view, I made up my mind to see Lady Erpingham herself, resolving, if my object could not be accomplished without the interven-

tion of a third person, to give the matter up as lost, and to retreat in the quietest way, and with the best grace possible.

In this frame of mind, I proceeded directly to the house which I intended once more to call my own. The old porter was dead, and his successor being entirely unacquainted with my person, I was under the necessity of announcing myself before I was even permitted to gain a footing in the hall. When he heard my name he appeared by his looks to doubt the correctness of my assertion. Perhaps, he had never heard of such a person, as the husband of his lady. But after waiting a few moments, during which the porter was pondering upon the course to be adopted, I was conducted into an anti-room, where in a short time I was greeted by a lady, who was announced to me as Miss Toadeater.

The laws of politeness were never

more rigidly adhered to in China itself, than in this interview. Every article in every title which the code of ceremony contained, was gone through, before it was permitted me to enter upon the business which had brought me to the house.

I requested to have the honour of seeing Lady Erpingham. Miss Toadeater gave me to understand that her Ladyship's hour of receiving visitors had not yet arrived. I ventured to allege that my business was of a nature that would not brook delay. Her Ladyship was on the point of entering her carriage, for her morning's ride, but upon my earnest solicitation Miss Toadeater, said she would, in this instance, infringe upon her Ladyship's commands, and inform her Ladyship of my visit.

Her Ladyship at last burst upon me in all her state and dignity, most gorgeously equipped for her morning's

airing. She made me a low curtesy with,

"My Lord!"

"My Lady!"

As I spoke I made a bow corresponding in profundity to her Ladyship's curtesy. Before I could gain the erect position, her Ladyship took up the discourse.

"I hardly know, my Lord, *exactly* to what circumstance I am indebted for the honour of this visit. Mr. Frill has not as yet made any report on ——"

"No, my Lady, nor ever will. At least it is very unlikely that he should make any report to the purpose. Your Ladyship must excuse me, but really this is a case in which no third person can have a right to interfere. It is a matter entirely between ourselves, and the only point to be settled is, whether our children are to be put forward

in the world in a way becoming their situation in life, or not.

Her ladyship heard me with silent attention, but without any expression of countenance which indicated either doubt or conviction. But she vouchsafed no reply. Looking at her watch, she observed that her time was expired. She would, however, dispense with the attendance of Miss Toadeater, who was perfectly acquainted with her sentiments.

We parted as we met, with all the marks of outward respect.

I had already stormed the breach. To take the town, I apprehended would be easy. The citadel would then surrender at discretion. Miss Toadeater, indeed, seemed to consider herself entitled by the post she held, to throw every obstacle in the way of the negociation, for instead of endeavouring to conciliate, she thought proper to entertain me with a long ha-

rangue upon the angelic virtues of my wife, accompanied by indirect hints at qualities of an opposite description, by which, she was pleased to infer, I had been distinguished.

As if conscious of the truth of Miss Toadeater's allegations, I behaved myself with such becoming moderation, as to draw from her an acknowledgement of hopes, that she had been misinformed and mistaken. The conference was brought to a close in the course of about half an hour, and the following articles were agreed to by Miss Toadeater and myself, subject, however, to the approbation of her Ladyship, which the companion had no doubt of obtaining.

I was to have free egress and regress at all times, and seasons through the street door. The uninterrupted use of all the staircases and passages in the house. Access to the nursery, and school room between the hours of

eight in the morning, and eight in the evening. (As to this article, by the bye, I was a little at a loss, but as it was proposed by Miss Toadeater, I passed it without remark.) My library and the study adjoining, were to be delivered up to me in absolute fee simple, and I was graciously permitted to enter the breakfast, dinner, and supper rooms at meal times, as also, the ball, card and concert rooms, when properly arranged for the reception of company. It was further agreed that the domestics severally belonging to the contracting parties, should be kept separate and distinct; her Ladyship in all cases reserving to herself the right of dismissing such of my servants, as were rash enough to offend against the rules and regulations of the household.

To these articles I could start no reasonable objection, and I believe, I should have agreed to any proposi-

tion whatever, an obligation to a personal intercourse with Lady Erpingham excepted.

The ratification of the treaty by her Ladyship was forwarded to the hotel in the evening, and the following day I again took possession of my own house. As soon as I had seated myself in the study, and felt the consciousness that I was at home, I gave directions that the children should be summoned. I saw a tall gawky looking girl, and an empty looking youth, who were introduced to me as my son and daughter. To have judged from the vacancy, which had settled on their countenances, their minds were as unformed as their persons. I could not deny their claims of affiliation, and therefore, received them with the best grace possible, hoping that time and attention would render them a little like the rest of world.

When the hour of dinner arrived,

and I found myself again seated at the bottom of the table, I was half inclined to fancy that I was sixteen years younger. I could perceive little or no alteration in the person of Lady Erpingham, and not the smallest difference in her manner. She was equally stiff, and ceremonious as pending the honey moon. During the repast, silent gravity usurped the place of conversation. Had it been a dinner of crowned heads, it could not have been more thoroughly stupid. The servants were ranged respectively behind their Lord and Lady, as if they had been drawn up for battle array, and wanting but the signal to engage in combat. An ideal line was drawn across the table and room, below which her Ladyship's domestics never descended, and above which, mine never ventured to advance.

I had now ample opportunity to lament the neglected education of the

children. Their actions, and the few words they uttered, betrayed the grossest vulgarity. Their behaviour even attracted the notice, and roused the indignation of Lady Erpingham, and she actually reproved Caroline for putting her knife to her mouth. "Toadeater," said her Ladyship, "instruct that creature, as to her behaviour in future, and do not let me be again witness to such outrages upon decency." The boy was still worse, for when his mother's eyes were not directed towards him, he amused himself with significant nods and winks at one of the footmen.

Lady Erpingham had always expressed a dislike to dinner company. She soon left the room with her companion desiring Caroline to follow them. I was, therefore, soon released from this state of purgatory. I gladly retired to my library with my son, anxious to find something that would

encourage my hopes of improvement, but I confess that my fears predominated.

The youth did not appear by any means so really deficient in intellect, as I expected, but he had still more of cunning than sense about him. His tutor, as I have before observed, had no sort of influence over the mind or actions of his pupil, and as the latter could seldom be prevailed upon to study, he was left to pursue his own inclinations, which led him to seek the society of the groom and the gamekeeper. If shooting had been the test of perfection, Charles would have been all accomplished, and however awkward he appeared at his father's table, he was perfectly at home in the stable, and in the dog kennel.

From the little I had seen of Caroline, I was satisfied that she possessed more pliability of temper, and more versatility of talent. Her improve-

ment was rapid, both in person and accomplishments. She appeared to be seized with the spirit of emulation, and to have been rouzed by her pride, at the discovery of her own deficiencies, when compared to the attainments, real or pretended, of the young females with whom she associated. In a few weeks I hardly knew her to be the same person, and I declare myself to have felt a degree of pleasure to which I had been long a stranger, at seeing her rapidly approaching towards becoming a handsome woman. She applied herself indefatigably to her studies, and having the assistance of the most eminent masters in the various branches of female education, promised to make up for lost time. But Lady Erpingham viewed her progress in knowledge with the same cool indifference, that she noticed her ignorance, and had it not been for frequent encouragement on my part, poor

Caroline, I believe would soon have relaxed in her exertions.

The ignorance of Charles was for a time a complete bar to his progress. Unlike his sister, he appeared devoid of emulation. He was now at a time of life when mingling with others is desirable. But to what public seminary could I send him, where he could find associates of his own rank? To have placed him, where his deficiencies would have degraded him to a level with the youngest boys, would have been the sure means of exposing him to insult, and breaking his spirit. On the other hand, while he remained at home it seemed next to impossible to wean him from his low propensities.

My only hope at present was in exciting his pride for dress. It in great measure succeeded. By the assistance of a French valet, he became an odd mixture of a *petit maitre* and a

postilion. But this only mended his exterior. The interior continued in the same empty state, and appeared to bid defiance to the entrance of all instruction.

I sought for a well disposed youth to place about him as a companion, expecting to work upon his mind by the force of example. But the innate superiority of the young man I had selected, only rendered the defects of Charles more visible, from the contrast which was exhibited. Charles, however, was aware of the striking difference, and as he declined to use his endeavours for placing himself upon a level with his companion, he gave way to a mean jealousy. Aversion, as might naturally be expected in such a case, speedily ensued. This broke out in ungovernable paroxsyms of rage; so much so, that the poor youth was reluctantly obliged to forego the prospects which his situation

in a family of importance held out to him, and which he had contemplated with the highest delight. I promised indeed to provide for him in another way, but according to my invariable custom, I entirely forgot him.

After much deliberation, I at last placed Charles under the superintendance of a gentleman, who had been extremely successful in his treatment of a similar case. The good effects of Mr. Gordon's mild and persuasive manner was soon evident, and if there was no positive promise of Charles becoming the man of sense, there was, at least, some probability of his preserving the exterior of a gentleman. If he was not likely to be a striking ornament to his family, a hope might be reasonably entertained that he would not be a disgrace to it. This was as much, under all circumstances, as could be expected.

His love of low company, indeed,

baffled the exertions of Mr. Gordon in many points, and could never be thoroughly eradicated. To this vice, he added another, of a nature equally to be regretted, because the possessor of it will always be a prey to others; it consisted in doing any thing, even in opposition to his own judgement, if he was dared to the attempt. If a horse was particularly vicious, Charles would ride him. His neck was perpetually in jeopardy, and he appeared to verify the old adage "that fools and madmen are never in danger."

Such was to be my successor, and I do not think, with all my folly, that with the appearance which he presented, my memory would have materially suffered by the comparison.

CHAP. XII.

A DEBUT.

IT would be a fortunate circumstance for parents, if their duty to their children ceased when education is considered to be complete. But unhappily the commencement of maturity is, of all others, the period at which most circumspection is necessary. The desire of reaching the moment, when restraint shall cease, is imbibed from earliest infancy, and as that moment usually arrives when the current of the blood flows with the greatest rapidity, too much caution cannot

be employed in restraining impetuosity, and in directing the passions in the path which should not be inimical to future happiness. I had myself suffered so much from the neglect of my father in this respect, that I was determined neither of my children should have to load my memory with similar reproaches. I resolved to promote their welfare, in the best way I was able, comforting myself, that if I failed in the attempt, I should at least have the satisfaction of having performed my duty.

When I refer to my daughter's welfare in the world, I am far from being desirous of assuming a merit which I do not possess. I confess that the happiness of Lady Caroline Monkton formed but a very trifling part of my scheme. My sole object was to see her well-married in the common acceptation of the phrase. To accomplish this the path was straight for-

ward, although the success might be doubtful. Lady Caroline had to be shown in the fashionable circles. The result was to be left to chance. Females, being deemed marriagable at an earlier age than men, Charles was at present no obstacle to my giving my undivided attention to the advancement of his sister.

The public introduction of a young female of rank, which of course comprehends fashion, is, to her, an era of the utmost importance. It is necessary that she should be set before the world with splendour becoming the dignity of her station. As I had no fortune to bestow upon my daughter, independent of what I was empowered, under former settlements, to burthen the estates as a provision for younger children, nobility, and a person by no means disagreeable, must have been Caroline's chief attractions. Marriages in high life, I knew by experience, had

nothing to do with affection. To prevent his doing worse, the heir is usually tied for life, by the management of his parents, before he is properly out of his leading strings. In cases where fortune is already sufficient, family is considered as of the first importance; and what blood in the country was more noble than that which was formed by the junction of the ancient houses of Vavasour and Erpingham? Caroline's pretensions were here undoubted; Cadwallader himself was not better descended. No young female, therefore, of equal expectations in point of property, ever entered the world under more favourable auspices.

During the season of Caroline's *debut*, our mansion exhibited a scene of gaiety unparalleled. Lady Erpingham thought proper to present her daughter at court, but having done that, she considered herself as exempt from any further trouble. The pre-

sentation, however, was the signal for noise and bustle. It was no sooner past than the house was turned upside down. My library was stripped of its natural ornaments for the purpose of providing an extra supper-room. The bookcases and books were huddled together in a garret; but as far as book-cases and books were concerned, I was passive. They were as much use to me in one place as in another, but I stoutly maintained my post in defence of my study, which was proposed to be thrown into the dining-room. When this inroad upon my comforts and independence was first mentioned, I was even ruffled by Miss Toadeater herself, amiable as were her general manners.

Notwithstanding all this bustle and confusion, Lady Erpingham would on no account suffer herself to be put out of the way. At her regular time of admitting visitors, she condescended

to receive the homage of the company with which the house was crouded from morning till night. She retired at her usual time, without betraying symptoms either of displeasure or satisfaction. It seemed a matter of the completest indifference to her, whether her daughter was married or not; and I sometimes doubted whether she recollected that she had a daughter at all.

But although Lady Erpingham did not think proper to take the post of honour upon this occasion, the consequence of the family was sustained to perfection by the Dowager Countess of Littleworth, a distant relation of Lady Erpingham. At an intimation from the latter, conveyed through the medium of Miss Toadeater, the Dowager was readily prevailed upon to occupy the places of directress-general of the revels, and *chaperone* to Caroline, both of which she filled in a

manner which met her own approbation, though I am not equally certain that every body else was of the same opinion.

As I may never have so fair an opportunity of expatiating upon the vast merits of Lady Littleworth, I should consider myself blameable if I passed it by. Nature had been extremely niggardly in furnishing the inside of her ladyship's head ; and Fortune, doubtless, on account of her being blind, had been equally niggardly in supplying her ladyship's pocket. But these deficiencies were amply compensated by a most unbounded stock of pride and presumption. Her ladyship was wholly dependant upon a small jointure, upon which, by practising the most rigid economy, she contrived to make both ends meet. Her whole soul was continually absorbed in schemes to make the most splendid

appearance possible. Without allowing herself the use of wine, or of plate, she kept a butler, a domestic of that denomination being indispensable to all who pretend to rank and fashion. The remainder of her ladyship's establishment consisted of a coachman, two footmen, a house-maid, and her own woman; all but the latter were on board wages. For a cook there could be no occasion, where no eatables were required to be drest. The spare diet allowed to herself and her attendant, was invariably cooked by the latter, under her ladyship's own immediate inspection, and in her dressing-room, to prevent the possibility of waste. After the frugal pair had taken their meal, the scraps of meat were regularly weighed before they were dispatched to the larder, and as regularly re-weighed on their appearance for their next meal. Lady Little-

worth prided herself in having a set of the most honest servants in London!!

It was therefore no matter of surprize, that stinted as her ladyship was at home, in even the necessaries of life, she should revel with an insatiable appetite in the fat pastures of Erpingham House. She appeared determined to make amends for past privations. The parties at our mansion were crouded to excess; for who could possibly resist ripe peaches and green peas in February?

It was a fortunate circumstance that the establishment, as settled by Lady Erpingham at the *happy* period of our marriage, included a *maitre d'hotel* as well as a house-steward; I might otherwise have been overwhelmed with trouble in the payment of bills. As it was, I had only to transfer over a few thousands at a time, just as they were wanted. The distribution to the va-

rious claimants was performed by the steward with a rapidity truly wonderful.

The presentation served as a prelude to Lady Caroline's fame as a first-rate beauty. In the paragraphs which daily adorned the columns of the fashionable world, fortune was wisely omitted; and I really began to think, from the flattering encomiums which were given in that mirror of fashionable life, that my daughter really had wherewithal to lift her above the common croud. I continued in this error about three months, when in casting my eyes over a page in the house-steward's accounts, I perceived the several sums of three guineas, two guineas and a half, and two guineas, placed against the word "Newspapers." I asked the steward if he supposed me mad enough to pass his accounts with such a gross evidence of fraud upon the face of them.

The man requested an explanation. I pointed to the items, observing at the same time, that I thought the three newspapers which were laid constantly upon my breakfast table, were quite sufficient for the whole family; and further, that if the charge were correct, which I could hardly believe, I would on no account submit to such abominable extravagance.

While I was talking, I turned over other leaves, and was completely thunderstruck at finding two or three entries of a similar description in every one of them.

Convinced that I was cheated, my next object was to bring the proof home to the house-steward. With that view, I dismissed him without any further remark, determining to proceed instantly to the office of the fashionable world, in order to procure the damning evidences of dishonesty. The spirit of vengeance was rouzed

within me, and I resolved to punish the crime in so exemplary a manner, as to be a warning to all house-stewards, down to the latest generation.

In my way to the Strand, I had contrived to work myself gradually into a degree of nervous excitability, which had about reached its height as I was ushered into the presence of the conductor of the paper. To use the expression of a statesman more eminent for sound than for sense, and more remarkable for impudence than either, my temper, " was in a state far from satisfactory." We both of us alluded to internal rebellion. His rebellion, however, was in the heart of the kingdom, whereas mine was only caused by an insurrection of the " black choler," which was fomented, and was on the point of breaking forth, in defiance of reason, prudence, and justice.

Forgetting that my errand was only to satisfy myself of the dishonesty of

my steward, I began, without ceremony, a virulent attack upon the conductor of the paper, whom I broadly charged with abominable extortion.

Mr. Buckler very wisely suffered me to vent my rage without giving me the slightest interruption. When I had a little cooled, of my own accord, he quietly asked if I had not mistaken him for some other person, as he had not the honour of being acquainted with me.

I immediately saw my error, not only for giving way to my temper, but for not making myself personally known. On my signifying to him that he was speaking to the Earl of Erpingham, he made a most profound bow, saying as he rose up, that it would be to him a matter of the deepest regret, if anything had been done which had given offence to so great a supporter of the publication, in which he had the felicity of being concerned.

Not being aware that my patronage had ever extended so far, I looked with astonishment at a person who could utter such a barefaced lie to my face. But the conversation was by no means at a stand still for want of words on my part, for Mr. Buckler continued his speech.

"I hope your lordship will do me the honour to credit my assertion, when I assure you, that from the commencement of the agreement which was made on the part of your lordship, by the Dowager Countess of Littleworth, we have invariably charged less for the paragraphs referring to Lady Caroline Monkton, by half-a-guinea each paragraph, than is our usual custom. The proofs which this book will afford you, if your Lordship will have the goodness to examine the different items, and compare them with the space in the paper which each occupies, will convince

you that I am utterly incapable of deceiving your Lordship.

He put the paper of that day in my hand, and as I read the different paragraphs, he pointed to the corresponding entry in the book. I was a good deal amused at finding that my family were not the only fools in the creation; and I certainly acquitted the proprietors of the paper of all blame for taking money, when people were silly enough to pay for the recording of the most trivial incidents, in a publication that dies with the day, and indeed scarce drags on its existence to the evening.

In the course of my labours, I pointed out a passage which spoke of the Duchess of Alnwater, and her three beautiful daughters——"Good God!" said I, "is it possible that the Duchess, who is a pattern of truth and propriety, should wish to be the propagator of such an abominable falshood; for certainly her daughters are three of the

plainest, not to say the ugliest, young women in the kingdom. Pray, Sir, do you not make an extra charge on such occasions?"

"Oh no, my Lord, such a distinction would be impossible. Besides, where there is real beauty, there can be no necessity for puffing."

I thought of Caroline, and gave a long interjectional whistle.

"Pray, Sir, may I take the liberty of requesting to see the originals of the several paragraphs which have been inserted on the part of my daughter."

"By all means, my Lord; those from our regular customers we keep on separate files; for it often happens that we receive general orders for a complimentary paragraph two or three times a week, as the case may be. On referring then to the file, we are at no loss for the style best adapted to the parties. Here is your Lordship's file. You will see every passage from, 'The

lovely daughter of the Earl of Erpingham, who was presented on the birthday by her charming mother, is universally allowed to be the most beautiful and accomplished female at present irradiating the luminary of fashion,' down to the entry of yesterday—'We are concerned to state, that the lovely Lady Caroline Monkton still feels some degree of pain from the accident which happened about three weeks since to her little finger.'"

I viewed the file, and was not a little surprized to find the whole of the articles in my daughter's hand-writing, which, by the bye, was none of the most lady-like.

"Will you allow me, Sir, to ask the price of my daughter's beauty and accomplishments in the first paragraph?"

"Five guineas, my Lord; but in this instance there was a combination of circumstances. It was not only the

first announcement of Lady Caroline, but it likewise recorded her presentation at court. The announcement and the presentation usually form distinct paragraphs, at three guineas each. But as Lady Littleworth gave us to understand that we might daily receive marks of her favor, we undertook to charge every thing at a reduced rate."

"Very moderate indeed, Sir!! but surely you do not receive at that rate for these trifling insertions of arrivals and departures?"

"By no means; they are mere matters of course. Indeed the plan adopted, in these cases, is one of economy; for an announcement in the Fashionable World being considered equivalent to visits upon arrivals and departures, and being only charged half-a-guinea, your Lordship will readily guess the immensity of saving in cards, to say nothing of the wear and tear of a footman. Were it not for the Fashionable

World, I am satisfied every family, whose acquaintance is even moderately extensive, would be under the necessity of keeping an extra male domestic."

"But here is the arrival of my friend Sir Gregory Goose, in the paper of this morning, and I see your charge is one guinea and a half?"

"True, my Lord; but then you will observe, that we pledge ourselves to Miss Goose being *charming*. For this we charge an extra guinea.

I took leave of Mr. Buckler, convinced of the extreme utility of the Fashionable World, and better pleased with my *beautiful and accomplished* daughter than I expected to be when I first made the discovery, as I plainly perceived that the newspaper praise of every other female originated from the the same source.

As I walked home through Leicester

Fields, I strolled into the Panorama, where the first objects that struck my attention were, Sir Gregory Goose, Lady Goose, and the *charming* Miss Goose. I congratulated the Baronet upon his arrival in town, observing that I had seen it announced in the newspapers.

"Dear me, my Lord, how odd!—only think, Lady Goose, they have put our coming to town in the newspaper. What pains those persons must take to ferret out all people of consequence."

I smiled inwardly at the Baronet's remark; then taking a cursory view of the painting, I made bow to the Goose family, and wished them good morning.

As soon as I got home, I sent for Caroline, to ask her how it was possible for her to give way to such abominable vanity, as to scribble her praises with her own hand. She assured me that

she had no further concern in the business, than copying the compositions of Lady Littleworth.

I much regretted when I was at the office, that I did not enquire what had been paid for making Lady Erpingham and myself, a "*happy pair*," at the time of our marriage. If it was paid for in proportion to the magnitude of the lie; the purse must have been very long that furnished the means. I made a memorandum in my pocket-book, to ascertain the matter at some future day; but from that time to this present hour, in which I am relating the circumstance, no trace was to be found in my memory.

CHAP. XIII.

PROPOSALS.

I AM perfectly aware that in the last chapter I have advanced one part of my story considerably before the other, but this is a mode of proceeding to which every person is liable who has not accustomed himself to the arrangement of his thoughts for the purposes of composition. In book-craft as well as in priestcraft, there are many points both of major and minor consequence, which are only known to those initiated into the mysteries of their respective orders. It is for this reason that the

works of one writer shall flow in a pellucid steady current, while those of another shall have all the unsightly appearance of a stagnant pool. And yet, when the conten. of both shall be thoroughly analyzed, the glittering style of the former shall be found, in point of real value, infinitely short of the solid sense of the latter.

It must not however be supposed, because I have said a word or two in favour of sense against sound, that it is my intention to praise muddle headed authors in general, and myself among the number. All I meant to infer, was the possibility that a book might be deficient in grace, elegance, order, and even perspicuity, and yet after all be tolerably decent. Writing and speaking are both of them apt to confound the judgement, by inducing us to give way to first impressions, without making a due enquiry into the proper source of gratification. It is in this way that at

breakfast I have often supposed myself delighted with a smooth easy composition of which not a single idea engrafted itself upon my memory, when in fact, I have been only pleased with the flavour of my buttered rolls. In the same manner when I have listened with delight to the finely rounded periods of Mr. Shanning,—when I have admired the tones of his voice and his graceful delivery, I have, in the language of a noble statesman, been ready to "*stand prostrate*" at his feet with delight. But when I have reluctantly seen Mr. Shanning resume his seat I have been unable to find any thing remaining of a brilliant harangue, but frothy matter seasoned with the smooth twang of empty verbosity.

To reason fairly upon the business, there is no other mode of telling a story so as to avoid one part running before the other, unless a writer proceed upon the plan of a polyglott bible, and in-

stead of applying the different columns to different languages, to use them for the relation of collateral and contemporaneous events, which sometimes intermingle and at other times have no more to do with each other than the inhabitants of the moon with those of the earth.

Having closed my affairs with the "fashionable world" it is now my duty to bring up the rest of my story to the same period. Having done that, I shall be again at liberty to take another start forward, and in due time hope to arrive at the end of my labours.

The first act of Lady Littleworth's reign was to give a most splendid ball, for which no less than twelve hundred tickets were issued. I attended to little that passed during the evening except to observe the degree of notice which my daughter excited among the marriageable unmarried part of the company. Although the ball was given

early in the month of February, and during the continuance of a severe frost, the rooms were crowded to such an excess, that with scarce a fire in any part of the mansion, every guest was in a state of thaw and dissolution. It is really astonishing to what inconveniencies persons *capable* of thinking, submit from inclination. But with all the capacity for thinking, it must, I think, be quite clear, that in such cases the powers of reasoning can never be resorted to, or no one could be content for fashion sake, to breathe a pestilential air and literally to "fret in their grease."

I considered myself truly fortunate that my persevering tenacity had secured to me the refuge of my study. In flying to it early in the evening, or rather morning, I escaped from a place to which, even in Lucifer's eyes, Pandemonium would have been a paradise. By retiring I luckily escaped

any fatal consequences, but I was given to understand that numbers dated their lingering diseases to the fatal ball. The beautiful Lady Charlotte Spilsbury, who during the evening, clad like a nymph of early autumn, was the gayest of the gay, entirely lost the use of her limbs by the rapid transition from overwhelming heat to the keen cutting of the northern blast.

The grand ball was succeeded by weekly parties, and on the intervening nights the dowager and my daughter returned the visits which had been paid them. Sometimes for a week together I did not even see my daughter, for although I was repeatedly in the same houses that she frequented, chance seldom led us to the same place at the same time. A country life had given her a strong constitution, and she really bore the fatigue in the style of a veteran in dissipation.

As Lady Caroline Monkton was

now absolutely on sale, it was my duty to pay every attention to such as did me the honour of bidding for her. With that view I regularly attended every morning in my study from one o'clock till three. At first the proposals of fathers, mothers, uncles, and aunts in favour of their respective relatives, as well as conditional offers from young men on their own account, were pretty numerous. Seldom a day indeed passed without my having to discuss the business at length, four or five times. But the smallness of the fortune was the bar to hungry nobility; Caroline herself, I fear, had no great charms for nobility not in want, and Lady Erpingham was a bar to commoners of every description.

Twenty thousand pounds was the utmost I could ensure to Lady Caroline. This sum I almost invariably found to fall far short of expectation. One sprig of fashion and family asked

me if I was really serious. On assuring him that I never was less inclined to joke in my life, he observed that I ought to be ashamed of myself.

"But I'll tell you what, my Lord," added he, "Lady Caroline is really passable, and I've an immense regard for her mother. Your family, my Lord Erpingham, and that of the Countess, one need not be ashamed of. Without a further waste of words, I'll take Lady Caroline at eighty thousand, and rat me if I'd take any other woman under a hundred thousand.—I see that your Lordship is inclined to make advances, but I would not make Caroline Viscountess Ruinham for one farthing less than the eighty thousand."

I rose from my seat, saying that I was sorry that a negociation so happily commenced should be so soon terminated.

"Pray, my Lord, make no apologies.

I'm vastly sorry for the poor girl.—Give my love to her.—I hope the paltry twenty thousand will do something for her.—But it must be where the blood wants ennobling."

On the next negociation I adopted a different plan. I talked of so much down and hinted largely at personal property at my death. But it would not do, for I found men of rank to be christians in nothing but in their dealings with jews. Although they permit the latter fraternity to prey upon their very vitals, in their concerns with each other they are as shrewd and as extortionate as the children of Israel. I did not altogether blame them, being satisfied at the time that further realities, not expectations, were out of the question. Expectations I held out abundance, and perhaps it was because I made them so plentiful that they were considered of such little value.

The certainty was the only point that admitted of serious discussion. I was every now and then reminded of my rank and fortune, and that my daughter was an only daughter. Lord Limber I was told gave fifteen thousand and had five daughters; at the same time his Lordship's fortune was by no means extensive. It was also observed that Lord Rington gave as much, and had no less than nine daughters. I urged the positive blood and beauty of Lady Caroline Monkton in opposition to the comparative mean birth and superlative homeliness of the Honourable Misses Cinnamon; and as a further illustration of my argument in favour of blood and beauty, I observed that although all the Misses Cinnamon had long been marriagable, and had been regularly brought forward, only one had as yet been disposed of.

All would not do. Ever day served

to diminish my hopes and to increase my fears. One reflection gave rise to another, and as the season was drawing towards a close I seriously began to grumble at the enormous expenditure, which did not seem the least likely to furnish any return, either, as the proverb says, in meal or malt. It afforded no pleasure at the time and held out no prospects for the future. But this was not the worst of it. What was spent in absolute waste would have brought Caroline's fortune up to the required maximum of the majority of suitors, although it might not have been sufficient to elevate her to the rank of Viscountess Ruinham.

My remarks on this subject have hitherto been confined to noble suitors, or such as must infallibly have become noble, in case the dissipation and debauchery of the son did not happen to be greater than the like courses on the part of the father, and, as has been of-

ten the case, sent the former to his grave loaded with all the infirmities of old age, and left the latter in the possession, not indeed of youth, but of health and vigour, with the probability of outliving his third generation.

As to commoners of *family*, I found them as lofty in their pretensions as *nobles* of family. Indeed there were two or three that had no objection to Lady Caroline on the score either of family or fortune, and who would have condescended to marry her if she would have covenanted to drop the "Lady" by courtesy. Lady Erpingham herself started no dislike to the antiquity or respectability of their families, but with her a coronet was indispensible, and unless they were possessed of that it was of no consequence whether they were descended from Noah's first son or his third. But the parties I have alluded to as requiring a complete spoliation of all title, entertained their

species of pride as obstinately as her ladyship, although it was of an opposite nature. They would not degrade themselves and their families by the acceptance of a peerage, which would place the first of commoners with the last of Lords, and consign them to the rear of tinkers, tailors, weavers and perriwig makers.

The declaration that a title would be refused was publickly made.——I wonder if it was ever proffered!

The proposition which most met my approbation was from a follower of Moses on the part of his son. It was liberal in the extreme, and completely freed from the least tincture of judaism. Mr. Iscariot engaged that he and his son would embrace christianity,—that they would not only take Lady Caroline without fortune, but would transfer to my own use the twenty thousand pounds which I could charge upon my estates. In addition to this, they

expressed a willingness, if I wanted it, of lending me fifty thousand pounds on no better security than my bond and judgment. The Iscariot family possessed souls. They even proposed to eat pork in my presence as a test of their sincerity.



CHAP. XIV.

NEGOCIATIONS.

IF the demands on account of our profuse style of living, had not come upon me faster than I could answer them, I do not imagine I should have regarded Mr. Iscariot, in the light of a relation with much complacency. But as his entrance into my study had immediately succeeded the exit of a most importunate dun, I coupled the jew and the convenience together, and found the mixture not only palatable but even pleasant to the taste.

Before I ventured to hint such a pro-

position to Lady Erpingham, I viewed it in every possible shape. In whatever position I placed it, convenience was apparent. The difficulties, however, as far as regarded her Ladyship, were apparently insurmountable. But what is the act to which necessity may not drive a man? There was something most unquestionably repulsive, in making a son-in-law out of Mr. Shadrach Iscariot. However it was become absolutely necessary that I should find some new mode of raising money, and by embracing the proposal I could obtain money for myself and a husband for my daughter by the same simple operation.

Lest I might alarm Lady Erpingham by the too abrupt introduction of a topic which at first view was likely to call up all the Vavasours from Adam downwards, in judgement against me, I determined to enter into a detail of my actual situation, hoping that her ladyship

would yield to prudence that which might be repugnant to inclination.

Through the medium of the kind Miss Toadeater I procured a private audience and a promise of serious attention. In the first place, I candidly laid before her ladyship a statement of my affairs, which I had drawn up to suit the present occasion, but which I doubt not was under the mark. By this it appeared that I was little short of fifty thousands pound in debt. Charles, I further observed, would in a very short time require an outfit adequate to his rank in life. This, I declared, would be wholly out of my power, unless some plan was adopted to free me from pressing embarrassments, principally created, as her ladyship must be well aware, by the recent introduction of Lady Caroline. I concluded by regretting that our daughter was still unprovided for, but that I was of opinion it was possible even now to

secure her an adequate establishment, before I should be under the necessity of reducing my style of living to the scale of economy which my situation demanded.

A gleam of sunshine shot across her ladyship's countenance, from which I augured a successful result. My hopes were still further increased by her ladyship declaring that she could not be averse to the adoption of any measure which was calculated to afford me the desired relief.

Emboldened by her ladyship's condescension, spirited on by my urgent wants, and after much circumlocution, chiefly upon the desirableness of Caroline being eligibly married, I came to the point. I clearly proved that the acceptance of Mr. Shadrach Iscariot would at once relieve my distresses and provide an establishment for Caroline far beyond any thing that had yet come before me in a tangible shape. I urged

the willingness of Mr. Shadrach and his father to abjure the doctrines of Moses, and explained to her ladyship the all-powerful effects of an act of parliament in wiping away all traces of jewish origin. In short, I resorted to every mood and figure of speech, with which my short acquaintance with eloquence could supply me, and stated and restated my arguments in every possible way which I thought capable of adding strength to my cause.

Lady Erpingham listened to me with the most profound attention, but with all my penetration I could not discover that any of my arguments made the least impression upon her mind. This however I will say, that if any did all did; for I could not perceive the slightest variation of feature or expression.

After I had exhausted my rhetoric I calmly looked towards her ladyship in expectation of a reply corresponding

to her former observation. But seeing that she still maintained her silence, with a voice and look which I intended should be affectionate, I most respectfully solicited the favour of her advice, which I assured her should guide me upon the present occasion.

Lady Erpingham, however, acted like herself. When I had made a full stop, she rose from her seat with more than her usual dignity, then casting upon me a look of the most sovereign contempt she stalked majestically to the door without vouchsafing a reply.

I had scarcely recovered from my surprize, at the conference having been terminated in a manner so contrary to what I had led myself to anticipate, when my daughter entered the room in search of me. She presented to me a handsome diamond necklace, which she said a jeweller had brought for her inspection, with the assurance that it would be sold a most tremendous bar-

gain. By her account, the jeweller had estimated it to be richly worth two thousand five hundred pounds to any one in the trade, but as it was the property of a person greatly in want of money, he had been empowered to dispose of it at the very low price of two thousand guineas! She concluded by expressing her admiration of its extreme beauty, and coolly asking me for a draft for the money.

My astonishment was as great in the affair of the necklace as Lady Erpingham's had been in the affair of the Jew. I looked steadfastly at Caroline for a few seconds, and then taking a lesson from her mother, I retreated in dignified silence to my own apartment.

On consideration, I was by no means sorry to perceive a strong love of finery in my daughter. I had never suspected her to be in possession of any of the nicer feelings, but till now,

I had been at a loss to discover what bias her ruling passion had taken.

Pope thinks proper to maintain that women must necessarily incline either to the " love of pleasure, or the love of sway." Perhaps he is right. Caroline certainly evinced no love of sway, for she submitted to be led by the dow ager in every thing. As to pleasure, her empire is so extensive, and her subjects of so many different nations, colours, sorts, sizes, and degrees, that it is impossible to convey a distinct idea to the mind without defining the genus and species. The anxiety, however, which my daughter showed for possessing this *trifle*, as she called it, convinced me that her notions of pleasure tended to external gratification.

Having resolved, for the best of all possible reasons, to give every encouraragement to the addresses of Mr. Shadrach Iscariot, I began seriously to consider the most effectual means of

his becoming my son-in-law. The certainty that wealth and splendour awaited her, would, I conceived, réconcile Lady Caroline Monkton to the match. *Her* repugnance overcome, the path was straight forward, except, indeed, any opposition should arise on the part of Lady Littleworth. But this I treated lightly, not in the least doubting that gold administered to the dowager in sufficient doses, would not be found in the least wanting of its usual infallibility.

I did not, however, permit my intended son-in-law to remain in ignorance of this probable obstacle to our mutual wishes. Mr. Shadrach wisely suggested the idea of converting the dowager into a warm friend. He therefore empowered me to enter into a negociation with her Ladyship, and to make any offer, which I might deem fair and reasonable.

I sounded the dowager, first as to

her inclination. Her pride caught fire, and she furiously denounced the plan, accusing me of a want of pride, principle, and a sense of decency. She threatened me with the vengeance of Lady Erpingham's family, and declared that she could never survive such a degradation. She then commenced a strain of invectives against Jews in general, and the Messrs. Iscariot in particular, ending with an anthema upon the whole race.

I suffered her to expend her ammunition, and then merely mentioned that I had heard the elder Mr. Iscariot say, that it was his intention to present to such of Lady Caroline's relations and *particular* friends, as would do him the honour of accepting it, a bank note of Five Hundred Pounds, for the purchase of wedding ornaments. But this, added I, is a downright insult upon the family.

"Mr. Iscariot is a gentleman," said

her Ladyship, smiling with the utmost complacency, "and I doubt not will be an honour to Christianity."

When I came, however, to request the dowager's assistance, I found the five hundred very inefficient. It was enough to purchase silence, but not co-operation. I offered a thousand. Her Ladyship demanded two. This I said, was exorbitant. We at last settled it at fifteen hundred.

But a new difficulty arose. Lady Littleworth was inclined to leave nothing to chance, whereas Mr. Iscariot's idea of remuneration were of a nature wholly conditional. Her Ladyship insisted that the whole sum should be paid down. Mr. Iscariot would only secure the money to be paid within an hour after the performance of the ceremony.

Several days passed before the negociations were completed. I gave up the business in despair, above a dozen

times; but at last it was settled that her Ladyship should receive a fee at starting of five hundred pounds; the remaining thousand to be paid at the return from church.

As to Lady Erpingham, I intended she should reconcile herself to the match. Indeed, I inwardly chuckled at the thought of her Ladyship's rage at the first *exposé*. I imagined the mingling the noble blood of the Vavasours with the red puddle of the Iscariots would rouse her from her state of torpor, if to rouse her was possible. I fancied that such a circumstance would most unquestionably excite her anger, but although I arranged her features in every possible way, I could not picture to myself how she would look in a passion.

By the aid of our new ally, the matter was brought nearly to a certainty. I paid every attention in my power to the Jews, but as they were positively

forbidden a seat at the dinner table, my means of entertaining them were not so extensive as I could have wished, or as their merits deserved. But they were not nice. Their sole object was high blood, and they kindly attributed Lady Erpingham's neglect of them to *low breeding*.

My next step was to prepare my daughter to the match. I represented to her, the extreme eligibility of the proposals which Mr. Shadrach Iscariot had made. I led her to compare the settlement that would be secured to her, on her becoming the widow of Mr. Iscariot, with the amount that had been offered from other quarters. I rung all the possible changes on equipages, jewels, dresses, &c. &c. &c., and I doubt not with all the volubility and urgency of an experienced match-maker.

Caroline was a most dutiful child. She expressed her willingness to fol-

low the advice of her dear papa, and did not make the slightest objection, either to the Jews, or to the secresy, which I enjoined her to preserve to every person, except Lady Littleworth. I particularly cautioned her against Lady Erpingham, and Miss Toad-eater, who would rather see her a noble beggar, than the wife of the richest and most respectable commoner in the kingdom. Lady Littleworth, I assured her was, with the exception of myself, her only sincere friend. I further harangued upon the very great merits of the dowager, and hoped that Caroline would have such a regard to her own interest as to adhere to Lady Littleworth's suggestions on every point that concerned her future welfare.

Matters went on swimmingly. My new friend deposited the five hundred pounds in my hand for Lady Littleworth. This I presented to her, and

I much question if an additional five hundred would not have made her as great an admirer of the laws of Moses as she had formerly been a reviler of his institutions. Mr. Shadrach Iscariot was now a young man of the most fascinating manners, and had not the wife of the elder Mr. Iscariot still continued in the land of the living, I doubt if the dowager would not have taken all allowable means, of robbing him of his liberty, but only to join with him in plucking the roses, and avoiding the thorns of life. Old Mr. Iscariot, in my eyes, was as disgusting a biped as I ever recollect to have seen, but what the old gentleman wanted in personal attractions, Lady Littleworth discovered to be amply compensated by his mental accomplishments.

According to their agreement Mr. Iscariot and his son publicly adjured the synagogue. A bill of naturalization was brought into parliament. An

extensive estate was on the eve of being purchased. The settlements were in progress. I had the seventy thousand pounds already in my hand—in imagination; and every thing seemed placed beyond the power of chance to effect a disarrangement of plans, which all the parties concerned were apparently forwarding with the most cordial co-operation.

CHAP. XV.

A SON-IN-LAW.

BUT fate had decreed that Lady Erpingham should descend to the grave unruffled, as far as regarded Mr. Iscariot, and that the blood of the Vavasours should preserve its purity from all Jewish contagion for the present. The ceremonials which were to make my daughter Lady Caroline Iscariot, were to be performed in a few days, and, as far as it was prudent Mr. Shadrach was received with all the respect due to a future relative, when one morning the house was in a

state of confusion from the unaccountable absence of the bride elect. Lady Littleworth was distracted, she made the most minute enquiries among the domestics, and sought for her protegée in every direction. But to no purpose. Lady Caroline was no where to be found, nor were any traces of her discoverable.

The dowager betrayed the most serious alarm. She was roused from her golden dreams. The thousand pounds *in petto* vanished from her imaginary grasp. She flew to Lady Erpingham. But Lady Erpingham was a true disciple of Zeno. Her Ladyship did not stand in need of comfort herfelf, and felt not the slightest inclination to impart it. Miss Toadeater, indeed, took some interest in Caroline's fate, for she asked some questions of the domestics.

The dinner hour arrived, and Caroline still failed to make her appear-

ance. Nothing had transpired in the mean time to account for her extraordinary conduct. Her female attendant remained on the spot, but to prevent any counterplot, Lady Littleworth, since her becoming the friend of Mr. Iscariot, had superseded the abigial in almost all her offices of personal attendance. No information, therefore, could be derived from that source.

Mr. Iscariot and his son, came to me as usual in the evening, and expressed the deepest sorrow on the melancholy occasion. I own that my own feelings were not much more acute than those of Lady Erpingham, as far as Caroline was concerned, but the loss of the money made me as uneasy in reality, as the Jews were in appearance.

Mr. Shadrach suggested the idea of elopement, while his father seemed inclined to accuse Lady Littleworth of

having betrayed the cause she had undertaken to support.

I defended the dowager upon the plea of self-interest, which I was satisfied was, with her, a most irresistible stimulus, and as to elopement I could not bring myself to believe it possible. Neither Lady Littleworth nor myself could fix upon any person with whom there was the most distant probability of her taking such a step. She had been at a ball on the preceding evening, but before her going there she had privately met Mr. Shadrach in my study, and had permitted him to breathe his vows of eternal constancy and love.

But the suspicions of Mr. Shadrach were correct. Lady Caroline Monkton had been met in her journey to Scotland in the company of Captain Flanagan, a half-pay officer, whom for the first time she had met at the ball in question.

I regretted extremely the failure of my plans, but the greatest sufferer was Lady Littleworth, from whom the Jews demanded back the five hundred pounds, on pain of a public exposure of the transaction. Her Ladyship for some time wavered between "mammon," and her dignity, but at last she contrived to make a compromise with the Iscariots, but of what nature I know not, as being no longer a necessary personage in Lady Erpingham's establishment, she was speedily dispatched to her state and starvation. Perhaps the dowager undertook to make good Mr. Shadrach's admission to some other noble family. At all events, I understood that they continued on terms of intimacy.

The disappointment to Mr. Iscariot the elder, was, however, by no means inconsiderable. He had apostatized that his son might mingle with the Vavasours and Erpinghams, but when

the behaviour of Caroline had opposed an insurmountable barrier to the union, he was left to the stings and goadings of conscience. His first care was to endeavour to reconcile himself to the synagogue he had so lately foresworn. But he was denied admittance. His next idea, I believe, was to hang himself, and perhaps had not such a proceeding been necessarily attended with a parting from his enormous wealth, he might have put this plan of comforting himself into execution.

I endeavoured to make the best of the business. The jew's money would indeed have been extremely serviceable, but as there was now no possibility of my obtaining any part of it, my only remedy was to seek for some other means of discharging my embarrassments. With the fox, I reasoned that the "grapes were sour," and called my pride to my assistance in extinguishing my chagrin. My

daughter had thought proper to provide for herself, and had thereby relieved me from all further cares on her account. Upon the whole, when I came to balance the advantages of a jewish connection, with it attendant disadvantages, I was almost as well satisfied that it had not taken place.

In about a week from the elopement, I received a penitential letter from Captain and Lady Caroline Flanagan, asking pardon, for their precipitation and want of filial respect, but pleading the violence of their mutual love, (of six hours standing), and begging permission to throw themselves at my feet.

I readily received them into favour, having no motive whatever to indulge in useless displeasure. My daughter in the course of the first interview went still further in excusing herself, for she alleged her elopement to the dread of endangering her precious soul by uniting herself with a jew.

The "happy pair," established themselves in private lodgings, where they passed the honey moon, and if they passed it to their mutual satisfaction, Caroline was more highly favoured than her parents. To all outward appearance they were extremely loving, and I sincerely wished them the enjoyment of that happiness which, by the bye, I felt thoroughly aware was beyond their reach.

I was so much the friend of the new married couple as to intercede with Miss Toadeater in their behalf, begging that she would represent the affair to Lady Erpingham in as favourable terms as possible. The companion promised every thing, but nothing followed her performances. Lady Erpingham was inexorable.—Her daughter had degraded herself and her family, and she gave positive directions that the name of Flanagan should never be mentioned within her hear-

ing, upon the pain of her most severe displeasure.

Her Ladyship held out for some weeks, but a reconciliation was at last effected by the interposition of a perfect stranger, who, without knowing her Ladyship, chanced to mention in her hearing that the Captain, her son-in-law, was the second cousin thrice removed of the present Lord Carrigrohane, whom she was well assured was lineally descended from the ancient chiefs of the Firbolg and hereditary kings of Munster.

This information paved the way for her receiving the Captain's homage. On the next overture for reconciliation he was admitted to plead his own cause, and allowed to salute her hand. The Countess received the "*royal*" Flanagan with every outward testimony of regard, but her culprit daughter did not enter into her good graces for a great length of time. The Coun-

tess could forgive the Captain for aspiring to the Vavasours, but she could not extend the forgiveness to her daughter for having connected herself with *ignobility*, even though royally descended.

As soon as the reconciliation could be deemed complete the Captain made the usual application to me for his wife's fortune. I told him that he had already received it, in the cloaths which Lady Caroline had carried with her to Scotland. In addition to this her wardrobe had been carefully forwarded to his lodgings. The Captain insisted that his wife was possessed of twenty thousand pounds, for she had told him so. This I strenuously denied, but acknowledged that it was in my power, if I chose it, but not otherwise, to settle that amount upon her. The royal Flanagan maintained that it was the same, any how, seeing that twenty thousand was still twenty

thousand, and whether it was his wife's own, or whether it came from myself, it made no difference, at all, at all,— so that he received it either in money or bank notes, he was not particular which.

I begged to undeceive him as to his at all, at all, coming into contact either with a guinea of her fortune, or even the ghost of a guinea, as I had heard a one pound note vulgarly denominated. I assured him that I was by no means averse to my daughter's receiving all the benefit of the settlement I was empowered to make; so far from it indeed, that I should take especial care that it should not be diverted in any possible manner from her sole and exclusive use, and that too in such a way that she should not have the power of rendering herself a beggar if she was so inclined.

The Captain's eye-lids extended gradually during my last speech, and

towards the latter part they had arrived at their utmost powers of expansion. I conveyed my meaning in a mild yet firm and determined manner. The look of the Captain I can compare to nothing but what I imagine would be indicated upon the countenance of a man, who, for reasons best known to himself, doubted the evidence of his own senses.

With the utmost simplicity of manner, the Captain quietly requested me to inform him how he and Lady Caroline Flanagan were to live. I told him that on a point of such extreme delicacy I could not think of interfering. He and his wife, I further observed, had no doubt consulted their own inclination in uniting themselves, and they would doubtless consult their own convenience as to the mode in which they would choose to continue together.

The Captain gave a deep sigh, say-

ing by "Jasus" he was "bit," but it was no fault of mine. I had been a "frind" to him, and had been so kind as not to "*desave*" him, which was more than he could say of all the rest of the world. His regiment was just disbanded and he himself had nothing but his half-pay to live upon as a gentleman, and seeing how much he was in debt, how could he *kape* a wife that had nothing belonging to her but a great big appetite.

I observed that upon his former means, he had previously contrived to live, and as he always, I presumed, carried the appearance of a gentleman, they must be sufficient to enable him to do so.

"And by Jasus," cried the Captain as he turned every one of his pockets inside out, "I hav'nt a thirteen, and not enough to get that sweet sprig of nobility her meal of potatoes."

I expressed my sincere regret at his

unfortunate situation, more particularly as it was out of my power to render any effectual assistance. But although my means were at present confined, Lady Erpingham might probably open her heart and her purse, especially as she had entirely overcome her repugnance to the marriage.

——"And get milk from a dry cow. Her ladyship, begging her pardon, is little better than an old faggot,—only fit to burn, and yet wont burn neither."——

I could do nothing but shrug up my shoulders——

"But," continued the Captain, with a smile of self satisfaction, "you have got a nate little sate in parliament just vacant like, and if you'd just pop me into it, I'd be after paying my debts with my privilege."

I was not aware that there had been any vacancy in my boroughs till the Captain informed me, but as I had

not then lost sight of common decency, I declined putting in even my new relative, conscious that he had no one qualification for a legislator.

The Captain put his unhappy condition in a great variety of shapes, but I was alike inexorable to all. From arguments he got to persuasions, from thence to prayer, and lastly to threats. As I could not personally contend with him I called for assistance. Attacked front and rear he beat a retreat, to my great satisfaction, and I wish I could add that his retreat from me had been equally to my daughter's satisfaction, but I fear he exhausted that rage upon his unoffending rib which he meditated towards her farther.

The failure of the Captain's matrimonial schemes soon got wind. He had for some time amused his creditors with his prospects in fortune hunting, which he had from time to time represented as certainties; but now the

fatal noose was tied and all hopes had vanished, their patience was exhausted. They adopted a system of coercion, and civilly provided the descendant of royalty with apartments in the King's Bench, to which place he found it convenient to remove upon a moment's notice.



CHAP. XVI.

RETRENCHMENT.

THE Captain, to use a common phraseology, being gone upon his travels, Lady Caroline Flanagan was returned upon my hands; not much indeed the worse for wear, but as she was now totally unmarketable, it was incumbent upon me to take the proper steps for her future maintenance. Lady Erpingham did not make the slightest objection to her daughter being again an inmate in the same house with herself, notwithstanding her being a Flanagan, but it was coupled with a condition that Caroline should be

considered as my guest and not hers; meaning thereby that she should conform to the rules and regulations to which I had submitted, and which had been strictly enforced ever since my late return to Erpingham House.

But Lady Caroline was too heartily sick of her mother to remain under the same roof with her at any rate. As I could provide for her in a moderate way, without much personal inconvenience, I did not hesitate in putting her in possession of the means which would enable her to chuse a place of residence congenial to her disposition. I settled the twenty thousand pounds upon her in such a way that she could only receive the interest by monthly payments, and those only on her own receipt. I left the business in the hands of the lawyers with especial directions that no one should in any way interfere with her fortune, while the creditors of the Captain were kind

enough to take care that *he* should not interfere with her person. As soon as the arrangements were completed, by which the widow bewitched was assured of her income of one thousand a year, she took up her residence with Lady Littleworth, for whom she had always expressed a very great regard.

The choice of Caroline was eligible on every account. She lived under the sanction of a person of undoubted respectability. Lady Littleworth already maintained an external state, and the addition of Caroline's means would enable both to enjoy internal comforts.

My daughter has latterly absorbed all my attention, to the entire exclusion of my son. But Lady Caroline was happily off my hands, and I could have wished that it had been in my power to say the same thing of Charles. But although he has made no figure at all upon *my* page of history, during

his sister's *debut*, he was far from being an inactive performer at the Erpingham theatre. His expences, instead of increasing with his years, actually increased with his days. His expenditure in horses and stable paraphernalia were fully equal to my own, in my early days of folly. Without the formality of opening an account, he made me his banker. He set himself up as a judge of horse-flesh ; but, somehow or other, the horses which he purchased as tremendous bargains, were either sold again at a heavy loss, or else were speedily condemned for dog's meat.

So long as I had the means of meeting the calls of my son, I refrained from worrying him with lessons upon economy ; but, at last, his demands for *pocket-money* became so exorbitant, as to outstrip my own former extravagance, under more favourable circumstances. To mend the matter, although

Charles could scarcely be deemed to have attained to manhood, I learnt that two ladies had been, for some time, in the habits of levying pretty considerable contributions upon him. Altogether, it was no wonder that his purse stood very frequently in need of replenishment. My refusal to comply with these unceasing demands, which was really occasioned by my inability to meet them, drove the young heir to supply his wants in the way immemorially adopted in such cases, of borrowing a hundred to be repaid by a thousand. At first, I gave Charles credit for having resorted to retrenchment and economy; but I soon discovered that he was raising loan upon loan, without providing any thing resembling a sinking fund to discharge them. However, I had no means of preventing his engaging in those ruinous proceedings, so long as he could meet with encouragement to pursue them.

All the causes which had operated in converting Erpingham House into an imaginary palace of pleasure had now completely ceased, and that without leaving a wreck of satisfaction behind, which could in any degree compensate for the enormous sacrifices which had been made. There was now no occasion for an extra porter to give admission to the indefatigable labourers in the field of luxury and extravagance. The manna had ceased to fall, and all the glittering attractions had vanished. There was nothing more to be obtained, and the knocker of the door began to rust for want of use.

When the house was reduced to its former scale, I began to feel a little more at ease. I made every allowance for my son's extravagance, and curtailed my own expences, that, by increasing his allowance, I might detach him from such ruinous expedients. Perhaps in this I was actuated more

by pride than affection, and only parted with that which I could no longer enjoy.

At the close of the season, the tradesmen's bills came pouring in upon me from all quarters. The pile they exhibited upon my table terrified me; and my alarms were far from being lessened, when, by the exertion of my arithmetical powers, I managed to arrive at the sum total. I had foolishly taken it into my head, that I had sufficiently answered all demands, by the advances which I made from time to time to the house-steward. But these advances were only for extraordinaries, and formed no part of the regular estimates. A most formidable feature in the account of extraordinaries was, the cash paid to Lady Littleworth's checks —ostensibly, I imagine, to defray the charges of herself and Caroline for ice-creams and gewgaws; but I take it, in reality, to line the pockets of her

ladyship. Another such a bout, and I have no doubt that the Dowager might have kept a cook for the rest of her life, and supported the expence of a daily fire in the kitchen, together with a reasonable portion of eatables.

The amount of the ordinaries were so numerous, that if I was still called upon to support the establishment of Lady Erpingham, as stipulated in our marriage articles, I could not expect to discharge them, by the most rigid economy, in the natural course of my life; and I had not yet arrived at that pitch of self-command, as to feel satisfied at being loaded with debts which I had no prospect of paying. My son's extravagance stared me full in the face, and I saw no means of extricating myself from permanent embarrassment, but by the assistance of my wife. Charles still wanted three years of being of age, and I could tell by experience, what little dependance

could be placed on a son, on such an event taking place. Charles might have the same prejudices which I myself entertained on a like occasion. Our situation was, indeed, very different. I was independent in every respect; but in two or three years, I felt aware, that his necessities would call as loudly for some arrangement to satisfy our mutual wants, as mine. Still the event was distant, and far from certain. Creditors would, in the mean time, be importunate; and I could not expect to be a moment free from solicitations, with which it would be out of my power to comply. To Lady Erpingham therefore I directed my attention.

A school-boy never felt a greater dread of a flogging than I did at this portentous interview. I had made up my mind to be referred to Mr. Frill, at the first word. But such was the sovereign contempt with which I viewed

her ladyship's solicitor, that I resolved on no account to submit.

My application for an audience was answered, as usual, by Miss Toad-eater. Her ladyship would receive me at five o'clock.

At five I presented myself at the door of her ladyship's anti-room, and was there met by the amiable companions, who, after she had regularly announced my approach, with much ceremony led me to the chamber of audience.

After the regular interchange of formal civilities, I was requested to be seated. As soon as I was settled in my chair, her ladyship, who at my entrance had arisen from her sofa of state, again resumed her place, looking towards me for an explanation of the causes which had led me to her apartment.

In a speech which lasted about half an hour, I entered into a detailed ac

count of my financial resources, which I clearly proved to her were in a state by no means satisfactory. I appealed to her good sense as to the propriety of her reducing her establishment to a level with my present income. Caroline, I urged, was her child as well as mine; and it was the endeavouring to secure an eligible match for our daughter, that had plunged me into a state of embarrassment, which I should otherwise have avoided. I plainly proved to her, that without some such arrangement, the income which remained to myself would be entirely absorbed by the payment of debts contracted by our recent extravagance; and that I should not have it in my power to advance one single shilling towards the support of our son.

Her ladyship listened with her usual gracious attention. I had closed my speech with a recapitulation of the leading arguments; and when I came

to a final pause, I naturally cast my eyes towards her ladyship in expectation of some reply.

" I will see Mr. Frill in the morning, my lord; and——"

" Zounds, madam! Mr. Frill is——"

Her ladyship gradually drew up her chest, and during the operation of laying her arms in the most dignified manner across her chest, she interrupted me by saying, that she was usually styled Countess of Erpingham.

" Well then! Countess of Erpingham——"

" My Lord Erpingham, you insult me——"

" My Lady Erpingham, I have been laying before you a plain matter of fact; can you, or can you not, give me a plain answer?"

" Business, my Lord Erpingham," said her Ladyship, rising majestically from her seat,—" business I make a point of leaving in the hands of those

who are properly qualified to conduct it. Mr. Frill is——"

"—— A puppy of a coxcomb, with whom I should degrade myself by holding any further intercourse."

"You will, nevertheless, my Lord, make Mr. Frill the medium of any communications which you may deem necessary or adviseable to make to me, either on this or on any other affair of business. It is the only way in which I can receive them. Your lordship will think it needless to extend the conversation——"

"But your ladyship will allow me to——"

Her ladyship had applied her hand to the bell-rope, the instant she rose from her seat. As she uttered her prohibition to further talk, she rung it. A footman made his appearance, and before I could complete my sentence, he was desired to conduct Lord Erpingham to the door.

If I felt inclined to make a simile, I should compare my retreat to that of a dog who had burnt his tail. Had any one told me, some time before this event, that I should have tamely submitted to such treatment, I should have strenuously denied the possibility. But when a man becomes familiar with uneasiness, his pride and self-consequence are apt to fail him. His mind gets too much occupied with what relates to himself, and with the means of overcoming difficulties, to allow him to pay that degree of attention to the neglect and behaviour of others, which, under more favourable auspices, would have made a deep and lasting impression.

At one time I entertained serious thoughts of going abroad, and of leaving my creditors to make what applications they chose to Lady Erpingham. But the situation of my son prevented my putting that plan into execution.

I had too sorely experienced the want of a father's care, to leave Charles wholly without an adviser. Independent of this, I had not totally lost sight of common honesty. I had contracted debts; and it was my bounden duty to see that they were carefully discharged.

END OF VOL. III.

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